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WASHINGTON SQUARE PLAYS

VOLUME XX

The Drama League Series of Plays

Washington Square Plays

1. The Clod . . . . *By Lewis Beach*
2. Eugenically Speaking *By Edward Goodman*
3. Overtones . . . . *By Alice Gerstenberg*
4. Helena's Husband . . *By Philip Moeller*

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
WALTER PRICHARD EATON

PREFACE BY
EDWARD GOODMAN
Director of the Washington Square Players

GARDEN CITY NEW YORK
DOUBLEDAY, PAGE & COMPANY
1923

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INTRODUCTION

The rigid conventionality of the theatre has been frequently remarked upon. Why the world should ever fear a radical, indeed, is hard to see, since he has against him the whole dead weight of society; but least of all need the radical be dreaded in the theatre. When the average person pays money for his amusements, he is little inclined to be pleased with something which doesn't amuse him: and what amuses him, nine times out of ten, is what has amused him. That is why changes in the theatre are relatively slow, and customs long prevail, even till it seems they may corrupt the theatrical world.

For many generations in our playhouse it was the custom to follow the long play of the evening with an "afterpiece," generally in one act, but always brief, and almost always gay, if not farcical. Audiences, which in the early days assembled before seven o'clock, had to be sent home happy. After the tragedy, the slap-stick or the loud guffaw; after "Romeo and Juliet," Cibber's "Hob in the Well";

after "King Lear," "The Irish Widow." (These two illustrations are taken at random from the programs of the Charleston theatre in 1773.) This custom persisted until comparatively recent times. The fathers and mothers of the present generation can remember when William Warren, at the Boston Museum, would turn of an evening from such a part as his deep-hearted Sir Peter Teazle to the loud and empty vociferations of a Morton farce. The entertainment in those days would hardly have been considered complete without the "afterpiece," or, as time went on, sometimes the "curtain raiser." It is by no means certain that theatre seats were always cheaper than to-day. In some cases, certainly, they were relatively quite as high. But it is certain that you got more for your money. You frequently saw your favorite actor in two contrasted rôles, two contrasted styles of acting perhaps, and you saw him from early evening till a decently late hour. You didn't get to the theatre at 8.30, wait for the curtain to rise on a thin-spun drawing-room comedy at 8.45, and begin hunting for your wraps at 10.35. One hates to think, in fact, what would have happened to a manager fifty years ago who didn't give more than that for the price of a ticket. Our fathers and

mothers watched their pennies more sharply than we do.

For various reasons, one of them no doubt being the growth of cheaper forms of amusement and the consequent desertion from the traditional playhouse of a considerable body of those who least like, and can least afford, to spend money irrespective of returns, the "afterpiece" and "curtain raiser" have practically vanished from our stage. They have so completely vanished, in fact, that theatre goers have lost not only the habit of expecting them, but the imaginative flexibility to enjoy them. If you should play "Romeo and Juliet" to-day and then follow it with a one-act farce, your audience would be uncomfortably bewildered. They would be unable to make the necessary adjustment of mood. If you focus your vision rapidly from a near to a far object, you probably suffer from eye-strain. Similarly, the jump from one play to the other in the theatre gives a modern audience mind- or mood-strain. It is largely a matter of habit. We, to-day, have lost the trick through lack of practice. The old custom is dead; we are fixed in a new one. If Maude Adams, for instance, should follow "The Little Minister" with a roaring farce, or Sothern should turn on the

same evening from "If I Were King" to "Box and Cox," we should feel that some artistic unity had been rudely violated; nor am I at all sure, being a product of this generation, but that we should be quite right.

Matters standing as they do, then, it seems to me that the talk we frequently hear about reviving "the art of the one-act play" by restoring the curtain raisers or afterpieces to the programs of our theatres is reactionary and futile. All recent attempts to pad out a slim play with an additional short one have failed to meet with approval, even when the short piece was so masterly a work as Barrie's "The Will," splendidly acted by John Drew, or the same author's "Twelve Pound Look," acted by Miss Barrymore. Nor is it at all certain that the one-act plays of our parents and grandparents and great-grandparents, the names of which you may read by the thousands on ancient playbills, added anything to the store of dramatic literature. Some of them are decently entombed in the catacombs of Lacy's British Drama, or still available for amateurs in French's library. Did you ever try to read one? Of course, there was "Box and Cox," but it is doubtful if there will be any great celebration at the ter-

centenary of Morton's death. For the most part, those ancient afterpieces were frankly padding, conventional farces to fill up the bill and send the audiences home happy. To the real art of the drama or the development of the one-act play as a form of serious literary expression, they made precious little contribution. They were a theatrical tradition, a convention.

But the one-act play, nonetheless, has an obvious right to existence, as much as the short story, and there are plentiful proofs that it can be as terse, vivid, and significant. Most novelists don't tack on a short story at the end of their books for full measure, but issue their *contes* either in collections or in the pages of the magazines. What similar chances are there, or can there be, for the one-act play, the dramatic short story?

An obvious chance is offered by vaudeville. The vaudeville audience is in the mood for rapid alterations of attention; it has the habit of variety. This is just as much a convention of vaudeville as the single play is now a convention of the traditional theatre. Indeed, anything longer than a one-act play in vaudeville would be frowned upon. Any one wishing to push the analogy can find more than one

correspondence between a vaudeville program and the contents of a "popular" magazine; each, certainly, is the present refuge of short fiction. Yet vaudeville can hardly be considered an ideal cradle for a serious dramatic art. (Shall we say that the analogy to the "popular" magazine still holds?) The average "playlet"—atrocious word—in the variety theatres is a dreadful thing, crude, obvious, often sensational or sentimental, usually very badly acted at least in the minor rôles, and still more a frank padding, a thing of the footlights, than the afterpiece of our parents. It has been frequently said by those optimists who are forever discovering the birth of the arts in popular amusements that vaudeville audiences will appreciate and applaud the best. This is only in part true. They will appreciate the best juggler, the cleverest trained dog, the most appealing ballad singer such as Chevalier or Harry Lauder. But they will no more appreciate those subtleties of dramatic art which must have free play in the serious development of the one-act play than the readers of a "popular" magazine in America (or England either) would appreciate Kipling's "They," or George Moore's "The Wild Goose," or de Maupassant's "La Ficelle." To ex-

pect them to is silly; and to expect that because the supreme, vivid example of any form is comprehensible to all classes and all mixtures of classes, therefore the supreme example is going to be developed out of the commonplace stuff such mixed audiences daily enjoy, is equally to misunderstand the evolution of an art product in our complex modern world. But, indeed, the matter scarce calls for argument. Vaudeville itself furnishes the answer. Where are its one-act plays which can be called dramatic literature? It is a hopeful sign, perhaps, that certain of the plays in this volume have percolated into the varieties! But they were not cradled there.

If the traditional theatre, then, is now in a rut which affords no room for the one-act play, and if vaudeville is an empty cradle for this branch of dramatic art, where shall we turn?

The one-act play to-day has found refuge and encouragement in the experimental theatres, and among the amateurs. The best one-act plays so far written in English have come out of Ireland, chiefly from the Abbey Theatre in Dublin where they were first acted by a company recruited from amateur players. Synge's "Riders to the Sea," Yeats's "The Hour Glass," the comedies of Lady Gregory

and others of that school, have not only proved the power of this form to carry the sense of reality, but its power as well to reach tragic intensity or high poetic beauty. The sombre loveliness and cleansing reality of Synge's masterpiece are almost unrivaled in our short-play literature. Not from the Abbey Theatre, but from the pen of an Irishman, Lord Dunsany, have come such short fantasies as "The Gods of the Mountain" and "The Glittering Gate," which the so-called "commercial" theatre has quite ignored, but which have been played extensively by amateurs and experimental theatres throughout America; and the latter piece, especially, has probably been provocative of more experimental stagecraft and a greater stimulation of poetic fancy among amateur producers than any drama, short or long, written in recent years.

When the Washington Square Players, for the most part amateurs of the theatre, began their experiment in the spring of 1915, they began with a bill of one-act plays. With but two exceptions, all their succeeding productions have been composed of one-act plays, usually in groups of four, the last one for the evening sometimes being a pantomime. (It should be noted that a program of four one-act plays

has the unity of a collection. A short play following a long one is overbalanced and the program seems to most of us awry.) The reason for this choice was not entirely a devotion to the art of the one-act play. When players are inexperienced, it is far easier to present a group of plays of one act than it is to sustain a single set of characters for an entire evening. The action moves more rapidly, the tale is told before the monotony of the actors becomes too apparent. Moreover, the difference between the plays helps to furnish that variety which the players themselves cannot supply by their impersonations. Still again, it was no doubt easier for the Washington Square Players to find novelties within their capacity in the one-act form than in the longer medium. At any rate, they did produce one-act plays, and are still producing them.

Four of these plays are presented in this book, four which won approval first on the stage of the Bandbox Theatre and later, acted by other players, in various other theatres. One of them, "Overtones," is a theatrical novelty which if prolonged beyond the one-act form would become monotonous. Another, "Helena's Husband," is a bantering satire, an intellectual "skit," which would equally suffer by pro-

longation. "Eugenically Speaking" could certainly bear no further extension, unless its mood were deepened into seriousness. Finally, "The Clod" approaches the true episodic roundness of the one-act drama, or the short story, in its best estate. Here is a single episode of reality, taken from its context and set apart for contemplation. It begins at the proper moment for understanding, it ends when the tale is told. There is here more than a hint of the art of Guy de Maupassant. And the episode is theatrically exciting—a prime requisite for practical performance, and spiritually significant—a prime requisite for the serious consideration of intelligent spectators. In these four plays, then, written for the Washington Square Players, the one-act form demonstrates its right to our attention and cultivation, for it takes interesting ideas or situations which are incapable of expansion into longer dramas and makes intelligent entertainment of what otherwise would be lost.

Because such organizations as the Abbey Theatre have demonstrated the value of the one-act play in portraying local life, in stimulating a local stage literature; because such organizations in America as the Washington Square Players have demon-

strated the superior value of the one-act play as a weapon with which to win recognition and build up the histrionic capacity to tackle longer works; and, finally, because the one-act play offers such obvious advantages to amateurs, it seems fairly certain that in the immediate future, at least, the one-act play in America, as a serious art form, will be cultivated by the experimental theatres, the so-called "Little Theatres," and by the more ambitious and talented amateurs. As our experimental theatres increase in number—and they are increasing—it will probably play its part, and perhaps no insignificant a part, in the development of a national drama through the development of a local drama and the cultivation of a taste for self-expression in various communities. It is only when these experimental theatres are sufficient in number, and the amateur spirit has been sufficiently aroused in various communities, that the commercial theatre of tradition will be seriously influenced. When that time comes—if it does come—one of the results will undoubtedly be a more flexible theatre, the growth of repertoire companies, the expansion of the activities of popular players. In a more flexible theatre, where repertoire is a rule rather than a strange and dreaded experiment, and

where actors pride themselves on versatility and the public honors them for it, the one-act play will again have its place, but not then as a curtain raiser or afterpiece, to pad out an evening or "send the suburbs home happy," but as a serious branch of dramatic art. In that happy day Barrie will not be the only first-class talent in the commercial playhouse daring the one-act form, or at least able to induce a commercial manager to produce his work in that form.

But that time is not yet. The one-act play in our country to-day is an ally of the amateurs and the innovators. For that very reason, perhaps, it is the form which will bear the most watching for signs of imagination and for flashes of insight and interpretative significance.

WALTER PRICHARD EATON.

Stockbridge, Massachusetts.

PREFACE TO THE PLAYS

If fools did not rush in where theatrical angels fear to tread, this Preface would never have been written. Two years back the Washington Square Players were called, by many who had theatrical experience, fools. Now some term us pioneers. The future may write us fools again, or something better —the conclusion being that the difference between the fool and the pioneer lies in the outcome; the secret, that the motive power behind both is enthusiasm.

Without enthusiasm the Washington Square Players could never have come into existence, nor survived. From the first, when we had barely enough money for rent and none for the costumes and properties we borrowed and disguised, ours was an enthusiasm strong in quantity as well as quality. The theatre is a peculiar art. Both in production and reception it requires numbers and an enduring faith. Many a similar attempt has failed because its experimentation and expression have been restricted by a single point of view. Many have not

continued because the desire has waned in the face of the hardships and sacrifices entailed. But the Players rightly had a plural name. We were, and are, a collection of many individuals—actors, authors, artists, and art-lovers—all fired with the sincere desire to give to playgoers something they had not been able previously to find on the American stage. And our desire has been strong enough to face and fight, and to continue to face and fight, the ever-growing, ever-changing problems of finance, art, and human inter-relations, which are the inescapable factors of the theatre.

We believed in the democracy of the drama. But we understand democracy to mean, not the gratification of the taste of the many to the exclusion of that of the few, but the satisfaction of all tastes. We had no quarrel with the stage as it was, save that there wasn't enough of it. We felt there was a public that wanted something other than it could get—as evidenced by the rise of such institutions as the Drama League—and that that public was large enough to support what it wanted once it learned where to find it. The problem was to bridge the gap of waiting. And it was met by the sacrifices of all those who worked at first for nothing.

and then for little more, so that the Players would not fall into debt in the process of reaching an audience. As an able New York dramatic critic stated, the establishment of the Washington Square Players was merely one more proof that in America, as elsewhere, joy was a greater incentive to work than money.

This enthusiasm among the workers, both in quality and quantity, was generously shared by the spectators. The public which looked for plays, acting and producing different from what it could find on the regular stage, proved us right in believing that it was sufficiently large and interested to warrant our experiment. Critics and patrons gave us from the first, and we hope will continue to give us, that personal interest and sympathetic appreciation which have been among the most vital factors contributing to our growth.

So far we have produced thirty-two plays, of one-act and greater length, and of these twenty have been American. The emphasis of our interest has been placed on the American playwright, because we feel that no American theatre can be really successful unless it develops a native drama to present and interpret those emotions, ideas, characters, and conditions with which we, as Americans, are primarily concerned.

Of these twenty American plays the Drama League has selected four for this volume of its series. Excluding comment on my farce—for an author is notoriously unfit to judge his own work—I think it may be said that these represent a fair example of the success the Players have met with in trying to encourage the writing of American plays with "freshness and sincerity of theme and development; skilful delineation of character; non-didactic presentation of an idea; and dramatic and esthetic effectiveness without theatricalism." They are the early products of a new movement in the American theatre of which we are happy to be a part, and if their publication meets with the sympathetic, appreciative reception that has been accorded their production, we feel and hope that not only these authors, not only the Washington Square Players, but all of the workers in this new movement will be encouraged and stimulated to a further effort, a greater mastery, and a bigger achievement.

EDWARD GOODMAN,
Director of the Washington Square Players.
Comedy Theatre, New York, 1916.

I

THE CLOD

A One-Act Play

by

LEWIS BEACH,

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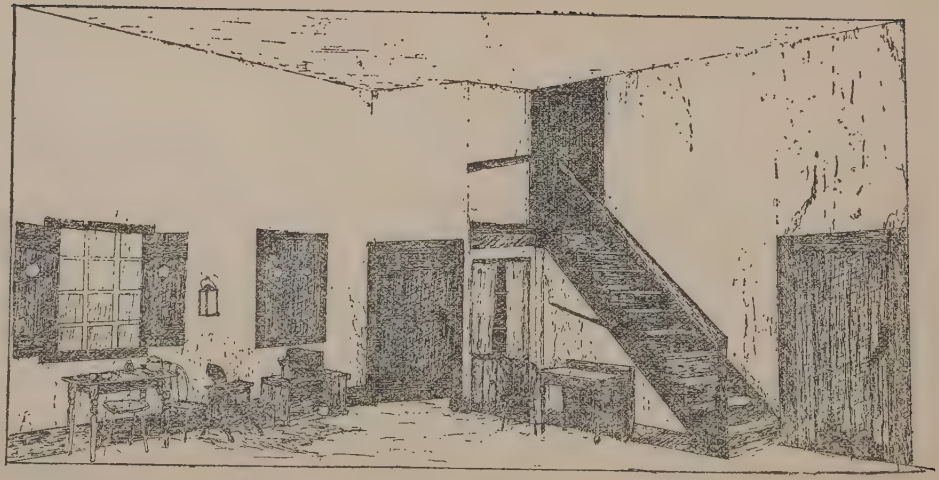
Emmet Lewis Beach, Jr.



SCENE FOR THE CLOD
(*Designed by John King*)

I

THE CLOD

A One-Act Play

by

LEWIS BEACH

(Note—The author acknowledges indebtedness to "The Least of These," by Donal Hamilton Haines, a short story which suggested the play.)

"The Clod" was produced by the Washington Square Players, under the direction of Holland Hudson, at the Bandbox Theatre, New York City, beginning January 10, 1916.

In the cast, in the order of their appearance, were the following:

MARY TRASK	*Josephine A. Meyer*
THADDEUS TRASK . . .	*John King*
A NORTHERN SOLDIER . .	*Glenn Hunter*
A SOUTHERN SERGEANT .	*Robert Strange*
A SOUTHERN PRIVATE . .	*Spalding Hall*

The Scene was designed by John King.

"The Clod" was subsequently revived by the Washington Square Players at the Comedy Theatre, New York City, beginning June 5, 1916. In this production Mary Morris played the part of Mary Trask.

Later it was presented in vaudeville by Martin Beck, opening at the Palace Theatre, New York City, August 21, 1916, with the following cast:

Mary Trask	*Sarah Padden*
Thaddeus Trask . . .	*John Cameron*
A Northern Soldier .	*Glenn Hunter*
A Southern Sergeant .	*Thomas Hamilton*
A Southern Private .	*Gordon Gunnis*

"The Clod" was first produced by the Harvard Dramatic Club, in March, 1914, with the cast as follows:

Mary Trask	*Christine Hayes*
Thaddeus Trask . . .	*Norman B. Clark*
A Northern Soldier . .	*Dale Kennedy*
A Southern Sergeant .	*James W. D. Seymour*
Dick	*Richard Southgate*

CHARACTERS

THADDEUS TRASK
MARY TRASK
A NORTHERN SOLDIER
A SOUTHERN SERGEANT
DICK

SCENE: *The kitchen of a farmhouse on the borderline between the Southern and Northern states.*
TIME: *Ten o'clock in the evening, September,* 1863.

The back wall is broken at stage left by the projection at right angles of a partially enclosed staircase, four steps of which, leading to the landing, are visible to the audience. Underneath the enclosed stairway is a cubby-hole with a door; in front of the door stands a small table. To the left of this table is a kitchen chair. A door leading to the yard is in the centre of the unbroken wall back; to the right of the door, a cupboard, to the left, a stove. In the wall right are two windows. Between them is a bench, on which there are a pail and a dipper; above the bench a towel hanging on a nail, and above the towel a double-barrelled shot-gun suspended on two pegs.

In the wall left, and well down stage, is a closed door leading to another room. In the centre of the kitchen stands a large table; to the right and left of this, two straight-backed chairs.

The walls are roughly plastered. The stage is lighted by the moon, which shines into the room through the windows, and a candle on table centre. When the door back is opened, a glimpse of a desolate farmyard is seen in the moonlight.

When the curtain rises, THADDEUS TRASK, *a man of fifty or sixty years of age, short and thick set, slow in speech and movement, yet in perfect health, sits lazily smoking his pipe in a chair at the right of the centre table.*

After a moment, MARY TRASK, *a tired, emaciated woman, whose years equal her husband's, enters from the yard, carrying a pail of water and a lantern. She puts the pail on the bench and hangs the lantern above it; then crosses to the stove.*

MARY. Ain't got wood 'nough fer breakfast, Thad.

THADDEUS. I'm too tired to go out now; wait till mornin'.

[*Pause.* MARY *lays the fire in the stove.*]

Did I tell ye that old man Reed saw three Southern troopers pass his house this mornin'?

MARY [*takes coffee pot from stove, crosses to bench, fills pot with water*]. I wish them soldiers would git out o' the neighborhood. Whenever I see 'em passin', I have t' steady myself 'gainst somethin' or I'd fall. I couldn't hardly breathe yesterday when the Southerners came after fodder. I'd die if they spoke t' me.

THADDEUS. Ye needn't be afraid of Northern soldiers.

MARY [*puts coffee pot on stove*]. I hate 'em all—Union or Southern. I can't make head or tail t' what all this fightin's 'bout. An' I don't care who wins, so long as they git through, an' them soldiers stop stealin' our corn an' potatoes.

THADDEUS. Ye can't hardly blame 'em if they're hungry, ken ye?

MARY. It ain't right that they should steal from us poor folk. [*Lifts a huge gunny sack of potatoes from the table and begins setting the table for breakfast, getting knives, forks, spoons, plates, cups, and saucers—two of each—from the cupboard.*] We have hard 'nough times t' make things meet now. I ain't set down onct to-day, 'cept fer meals; an' when I

think o' the work I got t' do t'morrow, I ought t' been in bed hours ago.

THADDEUS. I'd help if I could, but it ain't my fault if the Lord see'd fit t' lay me up, so I'm always ailin'. [*Rises lazily.*] Ye better try an' take things easy t'morrow.

MARY. It's well 'nough t' say, but them apples got t' be picked an' the rest o' the potatoes sorted. If I could sleep at night it'd be all right, but with them soldiers 'bout, I can't.

THADDEUS [*crosses to right; fondly handles his double-barrelled shot-gun*]. Jolly, wish I'd see a flock o' birds.

MARY [*showing nervousness*]. I'd rather go without than hear ye fire. I wish ye didn't keep it loaded.

THADDEUS. Ye know I ain't got time t' stop an' load when I see the birds. They don't wait fer ye. [*Hangs gun on wall, drops into his chair, dejectedly.*] Them pigs has got to be butchered.

MARY. Wait till I git a chance t' go t' sister's. I can't stand it t' hear 'em squeal.

THADDEUS [*pulling off his boots, grunting meanwhile*]. Best go soon then, 'cause they's fat as they'll ever be, an' there ain't no use in wastin'

feed on 'em. [*Pause, rises.*] Ain't ye most ready fer bed?

MARY. Go on up.

[THADDEUS *takes candle in one hand, boots in other; moves toward stairs.*]

An', Thad, try not t' snore to-night.

THADDEUS [*reaching the landing*]. Hit me if I do. [*Disappears from view.*]

[MARY *fills the kettle with water and puts it on the stove; closes the door back; takes the lantern from the wall, tries twice before she succeeds in blowing it out. Puts the lantern on the table before the cubby-hole. Drags herself up the stairs, pausing a moment on the top step for breath before she disappears from sight. There is a silence. Then the door back is opened a trifle and a man's hand is seen. Cautiously the door is opened wide, and a young* NORTHERN SOLDIER *is silhouetted on the threshold. He wears a dirty uniform and has a bloody bandage tied about his head. He is wounded, sick, and exhausted. He stands at the door a moment, listening intently; then hastily crosses to the centre table looking for food. He bumps against the chair*

and mutters an oath. Finding nothing on the table, he moves toward the cupboard. Suddenly the galloping of horses is heard in the distance. The NORTHERNER *starts; then rushes to the window nearer the audience. For a moment the sound ceases, then it begins again, growing gradually louder and louder. The* NORTHERNER *hurries through the door left. Horses and voices are heard in the yard, and almost immediately heavy thundering knocks sound on the door back. A racket is heard above stairs. The knockers on the door grow impatient, and push the door open. A large, powerful* SOUTHERN SERGEANT *and a smaller, more youthful* TROOPER *of the same army enter. At the same time,* THADDEUS *appears on the stairs, carrying a candle.*]

SERGEANT [*to* THADDEUS; *not unkindly*]. Sorry, my friend, but you were so darn slow 'bout openin' the door, that we had to walk in. Has there been a Northern soldier round here to-day?

THADDEUS [*timidly*]. I ain't seed one.

SERGEANT. Have you been here all day?

THADDEUS. I ain't stirred from the place.

SERGEANT. Call the rest of your family down.

THADDEUS. My wife's all there is. [*Goes to foot of stairs, and calls loudly and excitedly.*] Mary! Mary! Come down right off.

SERGEANT. You better not lie to me or it'll go tough with you.

THADDEUS. I swear I ain't seed no one.

[MARY *comes downstairs slowly. She is all atremble.*]

THADDEUS. Say, Mary, you was h——

SERGEANT. You keep still, man. I'll question her myself. [*To* MARY.] You were here at the house all day?

[MARY *is very fearful and embarrassed, but after a moment manages to nod her head slowly.*]

You didn't take a trip down to the store?

[MARY *shakes her head slowly.*]

Haven't you got a tongue?

MARY [*with difficulty*]. Y-e-s.

SERGEANT. Then use it. The Northern soldier who came here a while ago was pretty badly wounded, wasn't he?

MARY. I—I—no one's been here.

SERGEANT. Come, come, woman, don't lie.

[MARY *shows a slight sign of anger.*]

He had a bad cut in his forehead, and you felt sorry for him, and gave him a bite to eat.

MARY [*haltingly*]. No one's been near the house to-day.

SERGEANT [*trying a different tone*]. We're not going to hurt him, woman. He's a friend of ours. We want to find him, and put him in a hospital, don't we, Dick? [*Turning to his companion.*]

DICK. He's sick and needs to go to bed for a while.

MARY. He ain't here.

SERGEANT. What do you want to lie for?

MARY [*quickly*]. I ain't lyin'. I ain't seed no soldier.

THADDEUS. No, one could 'a' come without her seein' 'em.

SERGEANT. I suppose you know what'll happen to you if you are hidin' the man?

[MARY *stands rooted to the spot where she stopped when she came downstairs. Her eyes are fixed on the* SERGEANT.]

THADDEUS. There ain't no one here. We both been here all day, an' there couldn't no one come without our knowin' it. What would they want round here anyway?

SERGEANT. We'll search the place.

MARY [*quickly*]. Ye ain't got no——

SERGEANT [*sharply*]. What's that, woman?

MARY. There ain't no one here, an' ye're keepin' us from our sleep.

SERGEANT. Your sleep? This is an affair of life and death. Get us a lantern.

[THADDEUS *moves to the table which stands in front of the cubby-hole, and lights the lantern from the candle which he holds in his hand. He hands the lantern to the* SERGEANT.]

SERGEANT [*seeing the door to the cubby-hole*]. Ha! Tryin' to hide the door are you, by puttin' a table in front of it. You can't fool me. [*To* THADDEUS.] Pull the table away and let's see what's behind the door.

THADDEUS. It's a cubby-hole an' ain't been opened in years.

SERGEANT [*sternly and emphatically*]. I said to open the door.

[THADDEUS *sets the candle on the larger table, moves the smaller table to the right, and opens the door to the cubby-hole. Anger is seen on* MARY'S *face. The* SERGEANT *takes a long-barrelled revolver from his belt, and peers into the cubby-hole. He sees nothing.*]

SERGEANT [*returning his revolver to his belt*]. We're goin' to tear this place to pieces till we find him. You might just as well hand him over now.

MARY. There ain't no one here.

SERGEANT. All right. Now we'll see. Dick, you stand guard at the door.

[DICK *goes to the door back, and stands gazing out into the night—his back to the audience.*]

SERGEANT [*to* THADDEUS]. Come along, man. I'll have a look at the upstairs. [*To* MARY.] You sit down in that chair [*points to the chair at right of table, and feeling for a sufficiently strong threat*]. Don't you stir or I'll—I'll set fire to your house. [*To* THADDEUS.] Go on ahead.

[THADDEUS *and the* SERGEANT *go upstairs.* MARY *sinks almost lifelessly into the chair. She is the picture of fear. She sits facing left. Suddenly she leans forward. The door left is being opened. She opens her eyes wide and draws her breath sharply. She opens her mouth as though she would scream, but makes no sound. The* NORTHERNER *comes slowly and cautiously through the door.* (DICK *cannot see him because of the jog in the wall.*) MARY *only stares in*

bewilderment at the NORTHERNER, *as the man, with eyes fixed appealingly on her, opens the door to the cubby-hole and crawls inside.*]

DICK. Woman!

MARY [*almost with a cry—thinking that* DICK *has seen the* NORTHERNER]. Yes.

DICK. Have you got an apple handy? I'm starved.

[MARY *moves to the cupboard to get the apple for* DICK. *The* SERGEANT *and* THADDEUS *come downstairs. The* SERGEANT, *seeing that* MARY *is not where he left her, looks about quickly and discovers her at the cupboard.*]

SERGEANT. Here, what'd I tell you I'd do if you moved from that chair?

MARY [*with great fear*]. Oh, I didn't—I only—he wanted——

DICK. It's all right, Sergeant. I asked her to get me an apple.

SERGEANT. Dick, take this lantern and search the barn.

[DICK *takes the lantern from the* SERGEANT *and goes out back.*]

[*To* THADDEUS.] Come in here with me.

[*Takes the candle from centre table.*]

[*The* SERGEANT *and* THADDEUS *move toward the door left. As though in a stupor,* MARY *starts to follow.*]

Sit down!

[MARY *falls into the chair at the right of the centre table. The* SERGEANT *and* THADDEUS *go into the room at left. They can be heard moving furniture about.* MARY'S *eyes fall on a pin on the floor. She bends over, picks it up, and fastens it in her belt. The* SERGEANT *and* THADDEUS *return.*]

SERGEANT. If I find him now, after all the trouble you've given me, you know what'll happen. There's likely to be two dead men and a woman, instead of only the Yankee.

DICK [*bounding into the room*]. Sergeant!

SERGEANT. What is it?

[DICK *hurries to the* SERGEANT *and says something in a low voice to him. Satisfaction shows on the latter's face.*]

SERGEANT. Now my good people, how did that horse get here?

THADDEUS. What horse?

DICK. There's a horse in the barn with a saddle on his back. I swear he's been ridden lately.

THADDEUS [*amazed*]. There is?

SERGEANT. You know it. [*To* MARY.] Come, woman, who drove that horse here?

MARY [*silent for a moment—her eyes on the floor*]. I don't know. I didn't hear nothin'.

THADDEUS [*moving in the direction of the door back*]. Let me go an' see.

SERGEANT [*pushing* THADDEUS *back*]. No, you don't. You two have done enough to justify the harshest measures. Show us the man's hiding-place.

THADDEUS. If there's anybody here, he's come in the night without our knowin' it. I tell ye I didn't see anybody, an' she didn't, an'——

SERGEANT [*has been watching* MARY]. Where is he?

[*The* SERGEANT'S *tone makes* THADDEUS *jump. There is a pause, during which* MARY *seems trying to compose herself. Then slowly, she lifts her eyes and looks at the* SERGEANT.]

MARY. There ain't nobody in the house 'cept us two.

SERGEANT [*to* DICK]. Did you search all the out-buildings?

DICK. Yes. There's not a trace of him except the horse.

SERGEANT [*wiping the perspiration from his face; speaks with apparent deliberation at first, but increases to great strength and emphasis*]. He didn't have much of a start of us, and I think he was wounded. A farmer down the road said he heard hoof-beats. The man the other side of you heard nothing, *and the horse is in your barn.* [*Slowly draws revolver, and points it at* THADDEUS.] There are ways of making people confess.

THADDEUS [*covering his face with his hands*]. For God's sake, don't. I know that horse looks bad—but as I live I ain't heard a sound, or seen anybody. I'd give the man up in a minute if he was here.

SERGEANT [*lowering his gun*]. Yes, I guess you would. You wouldn't want me to hand you and your wife over to our army to be shot down like dogs.

[MARY *shivers.*]

[*Swings round sharply, and points the gun at* MARY.] Your wife knows where he's hid.

MARY [*breaking out in irritating, rasping voice*]. I'm sure I wish I did. An' I'd tell ye quick, an' git ye out of here. 'Tain't no fun fer me to have ye prowlin' all over my house. Ye ain't got no right

t' torment me like this. Lord knows how I'll git my day's work done, if I can't have my sleep.

SERGEANT [*has been gazing at her in astonishment; lowers his gun*]. Good God, what a clod! Nothing but her own petty existence. [*In different voice to* MARY.] I'll have to ask you to get us something to eat. We're famished.

[*With relief, but showing some anger,* MARY *turns to the stove. She lights the fire, and puts more coffee in the pot.*]

SERGEANT. Come, Dick, we better give our poor horses some water. They're all tired out. [*In lower voice.*] The man isn't here. If he were, he couldn't get away while we're in the yard. [*To* THADDEUS.] Get us a pail to give the horses some water. [*Sees the pails on the bench. Picks one of them up and moves toward the door.*]

MARY. That ain't the horses' pail.

SERGEANT [*to* THADDEUS]. Come along, you can help.

MARY [*louder*]. That's the drinkin' water pail.

SERGEANT. That's all right.

[*The* SERGEANT, DICK, *and* THADDEUS *go out back.* MARY *needs more wood for the fire, so she follows them in a moment. When she*

has disappeared, the NORTHERNER *drags himself from the cubby-hole. He looks as though he would fall with exhaustion.* MARY *returns with an armful of wood.*]

MARY [*sees the* NORTHERNER. *Shows no sympathy for the man in this speech, nor during the entire scene*]. Ye git back! Them soldiers'll see ye.

NORTHERNER. Some water. Quick. [*Falls into chair at left of table.*] It was so hot in there.

MARY [*gives him water in the dipper*]. Don t ye faint here. If them soldiers git ye, they'll kill me an' Thad. Hustle an' git back in the cubby-hole.

[MARY *turns quickly to the stove. The* NORTHERNER *drinks the water; puts dipper on table, then, summoning all his strength, rises and crosses to* MARY. *He touches her on the shoulder.* MARY *is so startled, that she jumps and utters a faint cry.*]

NORTHERNER. Be still, or they'll hear you. How are you going to get me out of this?

MARY [*angrily*]. Ye git out. Why did ye come here, a bringin' me all this extra work, an' maybe death?

NORTHERNER. I couldn't go any farther. My horse and I were both near dropping. Won't you help me?

MARY. No, I won't. I don't know who ye are or nothin' 'bout ye, 'cept that them men want t' ketch ye. [*In a changed tone of curiosity.*] Did ye steal somethin' from 'em?

NORTHERNER. Don't you understand? Those men belong to the Confederacy, and I'm a Northerner. They've been chasing me all day. [*Pulling a bit of crumpled paper from his breast.*] They want this paper. If they get it before to-morrow morning it will mean the greatest disaster that's ever come to the Union army.

MARY [*with frank curiosity*]. Was it ye rode by yesterday?

NORTHERNER. Don't you see what you can do? Get me out of here and away from those men, and you'll have done more than any soldier could do for the country—for *your* country.

MARY. I ain't got no country. Me an' Thad's only got this farm. Thad's ailin', an' I do most the work, an'——

NORTHERNER. The lives of thirty thousand men hang by a thread. I must save them. And you must help me.

MARY. I don't know nothin' 'bout ye, an' I don't know what ye're talkin' 'bout.

NORTHERNER. Only help me get away.

MARY [*angrily*]. No one ever helped me or Thad. I lift no finger in this business. Why ye come here in the first place is beyond me—sneakin' round our house, spoilin' our well-earned sleep. If them soldiers ketch ye, they'll kill me an' Thad. Maybe ye didn't know that.

NORTHERNER. What's your life and your husband's compared to thirty thousand! I haven't any money or I'd give it to you.

MARY. I don't want yer money.

NORTHERNER. What do you want?

MARY. I want ye t' git away. I don't care what happens t' ye. Only git out of here.

NORTHERNER. I can't with the Southerners in the yard. They'd shoot me like a dog. Besides, I've got to have my horse.

MARY [*with naïve curiosity*]. What kind o' lookin' horse is it?

NORTHERNER [*dropping into chair at left of centre table in disgust and despair*]. O God! If I'd only turned in at the other farm. I might have found people with red blood. [*Pulls out his gun, and hopelessly opens the empty chamber.*]

MARY [*alarmed*]. What ye goin' t' do with that gun?

NORTHERNER. Don't be afraid. It's not load——

MARY. I'd call 'em in, if I wasn't——

NORTHERNER [*leaping to the wall left and bracing himself against it*]. Go call them in. Save your poor skin and your husband's if you can. Call them in. You can't save yourself. [*Laughs hysterically.*] You can't save your miserable skin. Cause if they get me, and don't shoot you, I *will.*

MARY [*leans against left side of centre table for support; in agony*]. Oh!

NORTHERNER. You see, you've got to help me whether you want to or not.

MARY [*feeling absolutely caught*]. I ain't done nothin'. I don't see why ye an' them others come here a threatenin' t' shoot me. I don't want nothin'. I don't want t' do nothin'. I jest want ye all t' git out a here an' leave me an' Thad t' go t' sleep. Oh, I don't know what t' do. Ye got me in a corner where I can't move. [*Passes her hand back along the table. Touches the dipper accidentally, and it falls to the floor. Screams at the sound.*]

NORTHERNER [*leaping toward her*]. Now you've done it. They'll be here in a minute. You can't give me up. They'll shoot you if you do. They'll *shoot.* [*Hurries up the stairs, and disappears from sight.*]

[MARY *stands beside the table, trembling terribly. The* SERGEANT, DICK, *and* THADDEUS *come running in.*]

SERGEANT. What did you yell for?

[*No answer.*]

[*Seizing her by the arm.*] Answer!

MARY. I knocked the dipper off the table. It scared me.

SERGEANT [*dropping wearily into chair at left of centre table*]. Well, don't drop our breakfast. Put it on the table. We're ready.

MARY [*stands gazing at him*]. It ain't finished.

OFFICER [*worn out by his day's work and* MARY'S *stupidity, from now on absolutely brutish*]. You've had time to cook a dozen meals. You're as slow as a snail. What did you do all the time we were in the barn?

MARY. I didn't do nothin'.

SERGEANT. You lazy female. Now get a move on, and give us something fit to eat. Don't try to get rid of any left-overs on us. If you do, you'll suffer for it.

[MARY *stands looking at him.*]

Don't you know anything, you brainless farm-drudge? *Hurry,* I said.

[MARY *turns to the stove.* THADDEUS *sits in chair at left of smaller table.*]

DICK. What a night. My stomach's as hollow as these people's heads. [*Takes towel which hangs above the bench and wipes the barrel of his gun with it.*]

MARY [*sees* DICK]. That's one of my best towels.

DICK. Can't help it.

SERGEANT. 'Tend to the breakfast. That's enough for you to do at one time.

[DICK *puts his gun on the smaller table, and sits at right of centre table.*]

SERGEANT [*quietly to* DICK]. I don't see how he gave us the slip.

DICK. He knew we were after him, and drove his horse in here, and went on afoot. Clever scheme, I must admit.

THADDEUS [*endeavoring to get them into conversation*]. Have ye rid far to-night, misters?

DICK [*shortly*]. Far enough.

THADDEUS. Twenty miles or so?

DICK. Perhaps.

THADDEUS. How long ye been chasin' the critter?

SERGEANT. Shut up, man! Don't you see we don't want to talk to you. Take hold and hurry, woman. My patience's at an end.

[MARY *puts a loaf of bread, some fried eggs, and a coffee pot on the table.*]

MARY. There! I hope ye're satisfied.

[*The* SERGEANT *and* DICK *pull their chairs to the table, and begin to eat.*]

SERGEANT. Is this all we get? Come, it won't do you any good to be stingy.

[*Obviously, from now on, everything the* SERGEANT *says drives* MARY *nearer madness.*]

MARY. It's all I got.

SERGEANT. It isn't a mouthful for a chickadee! Give us some butter.

MARY. There ain't none.

SERGEANT. No butter on a farm? God, the way you lie!

MARY. I—

SERGEANT. Shut up!

DICK. Have you got any cider?

SERGEANT. Don't ask. She and the man probably drank themselves stupid on it. [*Throws fork on floor.*] I never struck such a place in my life. Get me another fork. How do you expect me to eat with that bent thing?

[MARY *stoops with difficulty and picks up the*

fork. Gets another from the cupboard and gives it to the SERGEANT.]

SERGEANT. Now give us some salt. Don't you know that folks eat it on eggs?

[MARY *crosses to the cupboard; mistakes the pepper for the salt, and puts it on the table.*]

SERGEANT [*sprinkles pepper on his food*]. I said salt, woman! [*Spelling.*] S-A-L-T. Salt! Salt!

[MARY *goes to the cupboard; returns to the table with the salt. Almost ready to drop, she drags herself to the window nearer back, and leans against it, watching the* SOUTHERNERS *like a hunted animal.* THADDEUS *sits nodding in the corner. The* SERGEANT *and* DICK *go on devouring the food. The* SERGEANT *pours the coffee. Puts his cup to his lips, takes one swallow; then, jumping to his feet and upsetting his chair as he does so, he hurls his cup to the floor. The crash of china stirs* THADDEUS. MARY *shakes in terror.*]

SERGEANT [*bellowing and pointing to the fluid trickling on the floor*]. Have you tried to poison us, you God damn hag?

[MARY *screams, and the faces of the men turn*

white. It is like the cry of the animal goaded beyond endurance.]

MARY [*screeching*]. Call my coffee poison, will ye? Call me a hag? I'll learn ye! I'm a woman, and ye're drivin' me crazy. [*Snatches the gun from the wall, points it at the* SERGEANT, *and fires. Keeps on screeching. The* SERGEANT *falls to the floor.* DICK *rushes for his gun.*]

THADDEUS. Mary! Mary!

MARY [*aiming at* DICK, *and firing*]. I ain't a hag, I'm a woman, but ye're killin' me.

[DICK *falls just as he reaches his gun.* THADDEUS *is in the corner with his hands over his ears. The* NORTHERNER *stands on the stairs.* MARY *continues to pull the trigger of the empty gun. The* NORTHERNER *is motionless for a moment; then he goes to* THADDEUS, *and shakes him.*]

NORTHERNER. Go get my horse, quick!

[THADDEUS *obeys. The* NORTHERNER *turns to* MARY. *She gazes at him, but does not understand a word he says.*]

NORTHERNER [*with great fervor*]. I'm ashamed of what I said. The whole country will hear of this, and you. [*Takes her hand, and presses it to his lips;*

then turns and hurries out of the house. MARY *still holds the gun in her hand. She pushes a strand of gray hair back from her face, and begins to pick up the fragments of the broken coffee cup.*]

MARY [*in dead, flat tone*]. I'll have to drink out the tin cup now.

[*The hoof-beats of the* NORTHERNER'S *horse are heard.*]

Curtain.

Albion College Library

II

EUGENICALLY SPEAKING

A One-Act Play

By

EDWARD GOODMAN

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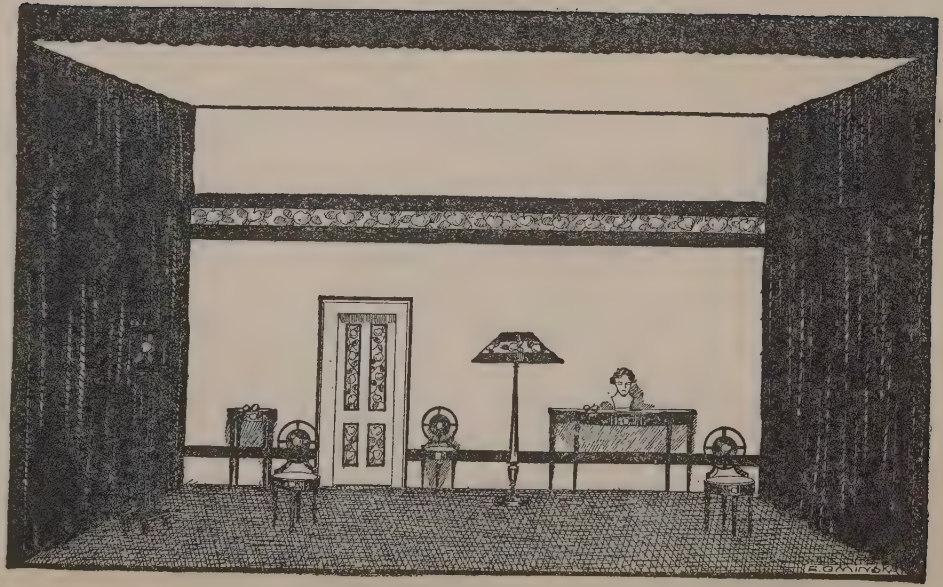

SCENE FOR EUGENICALLY SPEAKING
(Designed by Engelbert Gminska)

II

EUGENICALLY SPEAKING

By

EDWARD GOODMAN

"Eugenically Speaking" was produced by the Washington Square Players, under the direction of Philip Moeller, as part of their first program at the Bandbox Theatre, New York City, beginning February 19, 1915.

In the cast, in the order of their appearance, were the following:

Una Braithewaite . . .	*Florence Enright*
George Coxey	*Karl Karsten*
Mr. Braithewaite . . .	*George C. Somnes*
Jarvis a manservant . .	*Ralph Roeder*

The scene was designed by Engelbert Gminska and Miss Enright's costume by Mrs. Edward Flammer.

"Eugenically Speaking" was subsequently revived

by the Washington Square Players at the Comedy Theatre, New York City, beginning August 30, 1916. In this production Arthur Hohl played the part of George Coxey; Robert Strange, Wm. Braithewaite; and Spalding Hall, Jarvis.

CHARACTERS

UNA	A girl
GEORGE COXEY	A conductor
MR. BRAITHEWAITE. . . .	A financier
JARVIS	A butler

TIME: *Between to-day and to-morrow.*

SCENE: *A room in the Braithewaite mansion, richly but tastefully furnished. Among these furnishings it is necessary for the play to note, besides the door at the back, only the table that stands a little to the right of the centre of the room, with a statue on it, and three chairs which stand, one to the right, one to the left, and one in the middle.*

It is a winter afternoon, and the room is illuminated by invisible lights.

Enter UNA, *followed by* GEORGE COXEY. UNA *is a charming, fashionable girl of twenty with a*

suave blend of will and poise. GEORGE COXEY *is a handsome, well-built, magnetic-looking youth of about twenty-five. He is dressed in the garb of a street-car conductor and carries the cap in his hand. Although somewhat inconvenienced and preoccupied with the novelty of his surroundings and his situation, he remains, in the main, in excellent self-possession, an occasional twinkle in his eye showing that he is even quietly alive to a certain humor in the adventure. Above all, his attitude is that rare one, which we like to feel typical of American youth, of facing an unusual situation firmly, and seeing and grasping its possibilities quickly.*

He stands near the door, waiting, examining the room and warming his hands, while UNA *goes to the bell and rings it and then proceeds to the mirror to primp a little. When she is finished she turns and notices him.*

UNA. Why, my dear man, sit down. [*She points to a chair at the right.*]

GEORGE. Thanks, after you.

UNA [*laughs*]. Oh! Excuse me. I forgot. You're a car conductor. Naturally you're polite.

GEORGE. Not naturally, Miss. But I've learned.

UNA. An apt pupil, too. Let me teach you then that the ruder you are to a woman, the more she'll hate you—or love you. [*She goes up to him and invites him with a gesture.*] Sit down.

[GEORGE *remains immobile.*]

The polite are not only bourgeois, they're boring.

GEORGE. When I know I'm right, I stick to it.

UNA. But you must grow tired of standing.

GEORGE. If I did, I'd lose my job.

UNA. You have already. Sit down.

GEORGE [*firmly*]. After you.

UNA [*taking the chair, centre, and sitting on it*]. You're splendid. Now!

[GEORGE *sits in the offered chair a little stiffly.*]

UNA. Isn't that better than ringing up fares?

GEORGE [*smiling at his attempt at a pun*]. Fairly.

UNA [*rising, perturbed*]. No! You mustn't do that. That's vulgar.

GEORGE [*rising in alarm*]. What have I done?

UNA [*vexed again*]. Sit down. You mustn't jump up when I do.

[*He remains standing. Vexed but smiling she sits.*]

Well, there!

[*He sits down.*]

You punned! You mustn't. We all like puns, but it's good form to call them bad taste.

[*Enter* JARVIS *the Butler.*]

JARVIS [*starts slightly at perceiving the situation, but controls himself*]. Did you ring for me, Miss?

UNA. Yes. Please tell my father that I'd like to see him at once.

[JARVIS *goes out.*

UNA. Do you know the reason that you are here?

GEORGE. The hundred dollars you gave me.

UNA. No——

GEORGE. Yes. I wouldn't have left my job if you hadn't given me that.

UNA. I suppose not. But I mean, do you know why I brought you here?

GEORGE. I'm waiting to see.

UNA [*enthusiastically*]. I wonder if you'll like it.

GEORGE. Your father?

UNA. No. Dad's a dear. That is, he is when he sees you mean business.

[*Enter* MR. BRAITHEWAITE. *He is a well-preserved man near sixty, almost always completely master of himself. On seeing* COXEY *he, too, gives a little start and then controls himself.*]

BRAITHEWAITE. Una, dear?

UNA [*jumping up in excitement*]. Oh, Daddy! I'm so glad you were in. [*To* GEORGE *who has risen, too.*] Keep your seat. Draw up a chair, Dad—I've done it.

BRAITHEWAITE. Done what?

UNA [*bringing up a chair and placing it to her right*]. Do sit down, Dad. He's so delicious. He won't sit down till we do—and you know how much they have to stand.

BRAITHEWAITE [*looks at* GEORGE *and* UNA *and then sits in the chair allotted to him, whereupon* UNA *sits in hers and then* GEORGE *sits down*]. Now, dear, what is it you have done?

UNA. Selected a husband.

[GEORGE *moves a little uneasily.* BRAITHEWAITE *looks at* GEORGE *and then speaks to* UNA.]

BRAITHEWAITE. You mean?

UNA [*pointing to* GEORGE]. Him!

[GEORGE *rises in discomfiture.*]

Do sit down. We're all sitting now, you see.

[GEORGE *brings himself to sit down again.*]

BRAITHEWAITE. But, my dear——

UNA. Now don't say a word until you hear the

whole story. You read that article by Shaw in the *Metropolitan*, didn't you? I did. You remember what he wrote? "The best eugenic guide is the sex attraction—the Voice of Nature." He thinks the trouble is at present that we dare not marry out of our own sphere. But I'll show you exactly what he says. [*She fusses in her handbag and pulls out a sheet of a magazine which she unfolds as she says:*] I always carry the article with me. It's so stimulating.

BRAITHEWAITE [*protesting*]. You're not going to read me a whole Shaw article, are you? It's five o'clock now and we've a dinner date at eight, dear.

UNA. It's a Shaw article, not a Shaw preface. However, I'll only read the passage I've marked. Listen. [*She reads.*] "I do not believe you will ever have any improvement in the human race until you greatly widen the area of possible sexual selection; until you make it as wide as the numbers of the community make it. Just consider what occurs at the present time. I walk down Oxford Street, let me say, as a young man." He might just as well have said, "young woman," you know.

BRAITHEWAITE. And?

UNA [*continues reading*]. "I see a woman who

takes my fancy." With me it would be a man, of course.

BRAITHEWAITE. For your purpose, of course.

UNA [*continuing again*]. "I fall in love with her. It would seem very sensible in an intelligent community that I should take off my hat and say to this lady: 'Will you excuse me; but you attract me strongly, and if you are not already engaged, would you mind taking my name and address and considering whether you would care to marry me?'

[BRAITHEWAITE *looks uncomfortably at* GEORGE *who looks uncomfortable, though amused, himself.*]

Now I have no such chance at present."

BRAITHEWAITE. Exactly. You see, he admits it.

UNA. Yes, but why shouldn't I have the chance? That set me thinking. I decided he was right. I am intelligent, am I not?

BRAITHEWAITE. I refuse to commit myself, dear, until I hear all your story.

UNA. Well, I decided I'd make the chance. You see, I—I've been led to think recently that I ought to be getting married.

BRAITHEWAITE. May I ask why?

UNA. Yes, dear, but I'd rather not answer.

BRAITHEWAITE. I beg pardon.

UNA. And when I looked about me for the possibilities in my own set, I—[*she makes a face*]—well, I wasn't attracted.

BRAITHEWAITE. I admit, in society, as a rule, the women grow stronger and the men weaker.

UNA. Exactly. And I knew you wanted to be a *proud* grandfather.

BRAITHEWAITE. You're mistaken, dear. I hadn't given the subject any thought; so I had no desires.

UNA. Well, I have . . . [BRAITHEWAITE *slightly shows that he is perhaps shocked.* UNA *notices this and continues in explanation*] given the subject a good deal of thought. I've spent days buying second-hand clothing to give away at the missions and lodging houses in order to have a look.

BRAITHEWAITE. At least there was charity in that.

UNA. Yes. You see I didn't want charity to have to begin at my home. Self-preservation is the first law of Nature.

BRAITHEWAITE. And self-propagation, I suppose, the second.

UNA. Well—the missions were no good. They

were all so starved and pinched-looking there I couldn't tell what they'd be like if they got proper nourishment. And I didn't want to take a chance. So I went to some coal yards.

BRAITHEWAITE. To find the devil not so black as painted?

UNA [*with a grimace*]. Blacker! I couldn't see what they looked like. Of course if I could have asked them to wash their faces.

BRAITHEWAITE [*looking at* GEORGE]. Considering what you have done, I don't see——

UNA. I did ask one, but he made some vulgar remark about black dirt and red paint. So I left him.

BRAITHEWAITE. And then?

UNA. I spent all to-day riding up and down town in street cars. It's very fascinating, Dad. All you can see for a nickel! I never realized what a public benefactor you were.

BRAITHEWAITE [*modestly*]. Oh, I am amply repaid.

UNA [*in explanation to* GEORGE]. Dad's the president of your traction company, you know.

[GEORGE *rises in fright.*]

Oh, that's all right. I've lost you your job, but I'll

get you a better one as I promised. Don't be afraid of Dad—in the parlor. Sit down.

BRAITHEWAITE [*to* GEORGE]. You might as well make yourself physically comfortable, you know. There's no telling how my daughter may make us feel in other ways.

[GEORGE *sits down again, regaining his composure a little.*]

BRAITHEWAITE [*to* UNA]. And so to-day you investigated travelling in street cars?

UNA. Yes. "Joy-riding," you know. Then I saw him—and decided. I knew he wouldn't dare to propose to me—under existing conditions.

BRAITHEWAITE. So you asked him to marry you?

UNA. Certainly not. I've too much consideration for you, dear.

BRAITHEWAITE. But I thought you said——?

UNA. I decided to bring him home to get your consent first.

[BRAITHEWAITE *starts to say something.*]

I knew you'd approve when you saw him. But I wanted to be sure I hadn't overlooked anything. And if I had, I didn't want to have raised his hopes for nothing. [*To* GEORGE.] Would you mind standing a moment, now, until Dad looks you over?

[GEORGE *fidgets a little in embarrassment.*]

BRAITHEWAITE. My dear, do you think the gentleman——?

UNA. "Gentleman!" Oh, yes, I forgot. I needn't have been so clumsy. [*She rises.* GEORGE *rises automatically. She continues to* GEORGE.] I apologize.

BRAITHEWAITE [*also rising and moving his chair aside*]. I fear you have been too rude.

UNA. So do I. I've never even introduced you. Father, this is—this is—— [*To* GEORGE.] By the way—I forgot to ask—what is your name?

GEORGE. Coxey, Miss.

UNA [*sounding it*]. Coxey. What's the first name? I can't call my husband "Coxey," you know.

GEORGE. George, Miss.

UNA [*triumphantly*]. George! There's a fine virile name for you. George Coxey! How strong that sounds! One of those names that would go equally well in the blue book or the police blotter.

GEORGE. I never——

UNA. Don't disclaim. I know you've never been arrested. One can see your goodness in your face.

BRAITHEWAITE [*reprovingly*]. Many of the best people go to jail now, dear.

UNA. I know. But he's not rich and thank heaven he's not a fanatic. Isn't he good-looking? And I'm sure he's strong. See those hands of his—a little rough, of course, but I like that, and so firm and, for his job, wonderfully clean. Don't hide them, George. They attracted me from the start.

BRAITHEWAITE. How did you come here with my daughter at all, sir?

UNA [*quickly*]. I got off with him at the car barn when he finished his run and asked him.

BRAITHEWAITE. Didn't you know you would lose your job by leaving that way?

GEORGE [*with a suppressed smile*]. Yes, sir.

BRAITHEWAITE. And you came at any rate?

GEORGE. You see, sir, she gave me——

UNA [*interrupting hurriedly*]. A beseeching look. Just one. I didn't use more than was necessary. [*Pointedly to* GEORGE.] You see, George, I have learnt economy from father. He hates me to be extravagant.

BRAITHEWAITE. That, my dear, is the chief objection I have to this episode—it's extravagance.

UNA. Please don't call it an "episode," father.

BRAITHEWAITE. You must admit it's—rather unusual.

UNA. In England, lords always marry chorus girls.

BRAITHEWAITE. But he is a conductor.

GEORGE [*angry*]. Yes. And conductors are——

UNA. As hard working as chorus girls—only. Don't be snobbish, George. Of course a conductor is more unusual, I admit. I can't help that though —— [*To her father.*] You shouldn't have called me "Una," if you didn't want me to be unique.

BRAITHEWAITE [*reminiscently*]. That was most unfortunate—most. It was your mother's idea. She believed in symbols—and in a small family.

UNA. Oh! Was that why——? Well, no matter. I've always thought it meant individuality and I've done my best to live up to it. [*She looks at the statue.*] That statue ought to be on the other side of the room.

BRAITHEWAITE. I'll have some of the men move it to-morrow.

UNA. I'd like to see the effect now.

BRAITHEWAITE [*slightly annoyed at this seeming irrelevance*]. I wish I could teach you concentration. I'm not strong enough to move it myself, dear, and——

GEORGE. Can I?

BRAITHEWAITE. Why——

UNA. Oh! If you would!

[GEORGE *goes over to it and then hesitates what to do with his cap which he has in his hand.*]

UNA. I'll take that.

GEORGE [*giving it to her*]. Thanks. [*He bends and lifts the statue without effort, while* UNA *watches him admiringly, fingering his cap. When he reaches the other side of the room he stops, waveringly, awaiting instructions.*]

UNA [*talking as* GEORGE *waits*]. Look at him. He's as fine as the statue, isn't he? And you know what you think of that. See the strength he has?

BRAITHEWAITE. Well——

UNA [*to* GEORGE]. Thank you so much. You may put it back again. That was all I wanted. [*After* GEORGE *has.*] I hope I didn't overtax you.

GEORGE. Oh, it ain't very heavy.

UNA [*triumphantly to her father*]. You see!

BRAITHEWAITE. But he uses "ain't."

UNA [*imitating the reproof of her father*]. Many of the best people use "ain't" now, dear.

BRAITHEWAITE. Not with his enunciation.

UNA. What was yours like when you were a railroad signalman?

BRAITHEWAITE. Una! The past of a public man should be private.

UNA. George has our children's future before him. All the others I know have only their parents' past behind. You could give him a job suitable for my husband. I'll make my husband suitable for the job.

BRAITHEWAITE. But you don't know him, my dear.

UNA. I don't know myself for that matter. If I don't like him, it's easy enough to go to Reno.

BRAITHEWAITE. Then you insist?

UNA. I'm tremendously eager. It's so unusual.

BRAITHEWAITE. I suppose I could sue Shaw.

UNA. Don't be silly. Sue an Englishman with German sympathies! Where's your neutrality?

BRAITHEWAITE [*sinking into a chair*]. Very well.

UNA [*running up to* GEORGE *with delight*]. Then it's settled, dear. We're going to marry.

GEORGE. Excuse me, Miss, we ain't.

BRAITHEWAITE [*shocked*]. "Ain't" again!

UNA [*correcting*]. "Aren't," dear—I mean, we are.

GEORGE. Not.

UNA [*backing away*]. Why not?

GEORGE. Because—I'm married already.

BRAITHEWAITE [*rising*]. What?

UNA. How annoying!

GEORGE. Married three years, and expecting a baby, Miss.

UNA [*troubled*]. Oh, please!

BRAITHEWAITE. You see what plunging means. I told you I believed in eugenic examinations first.

UNA [*walking up and down, thinking*]. Sh! Be quiet, father. Don't lose your head.

BRAITHEWAITE. Better than losing your heart.

UNA [*laughing*]. I have it. Of course. How stupid of me not to think. George.

GEORGE. Yes, Miss.

BRAITHEWAITE. Wouldn't you better call him "Mr. Coxey" now?

UNA [*paying no heed to her father's remark*]. George, you must divorce your wife.

GEORGE. Me? Why she's as good as gold and——

UNA. That's unfortunate. [*Thinking.*] Then I'll have to run away with you and let her get the divorce.

BRAITHEWAITE [*now really shocked*]. Una!

UNA [*innocently*]. What, Dad? Have you something better to suggest?

BRAITHEWAITE [*fuming*]. I can't permit it. I didn't mind the uncommon scandal of your marrying a car conductor, but I absolutely draw the line at common scandal.

UNA [*a little bored*]. Father, dear, why will you sometimes talk to me as though I were the Public Service Commission? There's going to be no scandal. You can keep it out of the newspapers.

GEORGE. Excuse me, but that don't make any difference. I don't want to get a divorce.

UNA. You don't? Why?

GEORGE [*embarrassed*]. Sounds like a song, I know, but—I love my wife.

UNA [*in despair*]. And you're the unusual man I'm to marry.

BRAITHEWAITE [*with the contempt of a professional toward an amateur*]. Stealing *nickels* doesn't develop the imagination.

UNA [*desperately*]. How can you love your wife? Some simple, economizing, prosaic, *hausfrau* who——

GEORGE [*with spirit*]. I don't know what you're saying, but you better be careful not to insult my wife. She's as good as you are and a rector's daughter.

UNA [*dumbfounded*]. What?

GEORGE. Yes. Daughter of one of the biggest sky-pilots in town. I met her at a settlement house. She put the question to me, too.

UNA [*angry and doubting*]. She——?

GEORGE. Sure. I've been through something like this before or I'd never been able to stand it so well.

UNA [*as before*]. Your wife——?

GEORGE. Had a good deal more pluck than you, though. Up and told her father she would marry me if he liked it or lumped it. He said he'd cut her. And he did. We never seen him since. But Naomi and I don't care. That's her name; so you can see she's a Bible-poacher's daughter. Naomi and I've been happier than any people on earth. [*Sternly.*] She's taught me to stand when a lady was standing. That's why I wouldn't obey you. She's teaching me how to speak, too, and if I do say "ain't" and a lot of other things I oughtn't to when I'm excited, that ai—isn't her fault.

UNA. Then she—Naomi—has done everything unusual that I wanted to do, before I did?

GEORGE. Sure. You can't be unusual to-day. Too much brains been in the world before.

UNA. How is it I never heard this story, if her father's so well known?

GEORGE. D'you think your father's the only one can keep things out of the papers?

UNA [*going over and weeping on her father's shoulder*]. Oh! And I wanted to be unique.

BRAITHEWAITE [*patting her*]. There, there, dear. [*To* GEORGE.] You'd better go, now, Coxey.

GEORGE. And my job?

BRAITHEWAITE. I'll see you still keep it.

GEORGE. Thanks. I don't want to.

BRAITHEWAITE. No?

GEORGE. I want a better.

BRAITHEWAITE [*putting his daughter aside*]. Indeed! Pray what?

GEORGE [*nonchalantly*]. Superintendent or something. I leave it to you. You know more about what jobs there are than I do.

BRAITHEWAITE [*controlling his anger*]. And on what basis do you ask for a better job?

GEORGE. Naomi always said my chance would come and I could take it, if I had nerve and my eyes open. I think now's the time.

BRAITHEWAITE. Why?

GEORGE. Oh, this story about your daughter wouldn't look nice.

UNA. Oh!

BRAITHEWAITE. You forget the power your father-in-law and I have in the press.

GEORGE. No, I don't. But I remember that you can't keep me from spreading the news among your men. And I don't think——

BRAITHEWAITE [*angry and advancing on him*]. I could have you prosecuted for blackmail, sir. Have you no honor?

GEORGE. Sure. My honor says provide for your family. I've got the makings of a big man in me, Mr. Braithewaite. You can't chain me down with a poor man's morals.

BRAITHEWAITE. Well! I——

GEORGE. I'll work in any job you give me, too. I'm not asking for a cinch, only a chance. If she—[*pointing to* UNA]—could teach me, Naomi can.

BRAITHEWAITE [*after a pause*]. Well, call around at my office in the morning.

GEORGE. Thanks. [*He goes out.*

UNA [*sitting to weep*]. And I thought I could be unusual.

BRAITHEWAITE [*patting her*]. It's easy enough for Shaw, dear. He only writes it.

UNA [*jumping up*]. That's it. I'll write it. I'll write a play showing it's useless trying to escape the

usual. [*Running up to her father,* GEORGE'S *cap in her hands.*] That will be unusual, won't it, Dad?

[*Reënter* GEORGE.]

GEORGE. Excuse me. I left my cap.

UNA [*stretching it out to him without looking at him*]. Here it is.

GEORGE [*taking it*]. Thanks. [*Approaching her.*] Buck up, Miss! You meant well.

UNA. I suppose I was too daring.

GEORGE. If you ask me, I think the trouble was you and that Shaw fellow wasn't daring enough. Marriage is a very particular sort of business. Now if you'd come up to me in the street and just asked me to—— [UNA *and* BRAITHEWAITE *look at* GEORGE.] Well—I—I guess I'll go. But remember my tip next try, Miss.

[*He goes out quickly, leaving* UNA *gradually grasping the idea and appreciating it, while her father's shock at what* GEORGE *has said is increased only by noticing his daughter's reception of the words.*]

Curtain.

III

OVERTONES

A One-Act Play

By

ALICE GERSTENBERG

Author of "Unquenched Fire," "The Conscience of Sarah Platt," and Dramatization of "Alice in Wonderland," etc.

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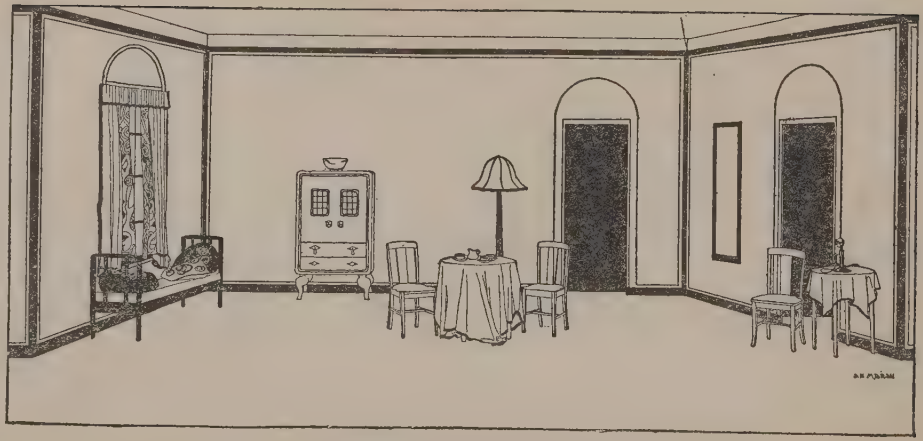

SCENE FOR OVERTONES
(Designed by Lee Simonson)

III

OVERTONES

By
ALICE GERSTENBERG

"Overtones" was produced by the Washington Square Players under the direction of Edward Goodman at the Bandbox Theatre, New York City, beginning November 8, 1915, to represent an American one-act play on a bill of four comparative comedies, "Literature" by Arthur Schnitzler of Austria, "The Honorable Lover" by Roberto Bracco of Italy, and "Whims" by Alfred de Musset of France. In the cast were the following:

HETTY	*Josephine A. Meyer*
HARRIET, her overtone . .	*Agnes McCarthy*
MAGGIE	*Noël Haddon*
MARGARET, her overtone .	*Grace Griswold*

The scene was designed by Lee Simonson and the costumes and draperies by Bertha Holley.

"Overtones" was subsequently presented in vaudeville by Martin Beck, beginning at the Palace Theatre, Chicago, February 28, 1916, with Helene Lackaye as star, with the following cast:

HARRIET, a cultured woman *Helene Lackaye*
HETTY, her primitive self . *Ursula Faucett*
MARGARET, a cultured woman *Francesca Rotoli*
MAGGIE, her primitive self . *Nellie Dent*

The scene was designed by Jerome Blum.

CHARACTERS

HARRIET, a cultured woman
HETTY, her primitive self
MARGARET, a cultured woman
MAGGIE, her primitive self

TIME: *The present.*

SCENE: HARRIET'S *fashionable living-room. The door at the back leads to the hall. In the centre a tea table with a chair either side. At the back a cabinet.*

HARRIET'S *gown is a light, "jealous" green. Her counterpart,* HETTY, *wears a gown of the same design but in a darker shade.* MARGARET *wears a gown of lavender chiffon while her counterpart,* MAGGIE, *wears a gown of the same design in purple, a purple*

scarf veiling her face. Chiffon is used to give a sheer effect, suggesting a possibility of primitive and cultured selves merging into one woman. The primitive and cultured selves never come into actual physical contact but try to sustain the impression of mental conflict. HARRIET *never sees* HETTY, *never talks to her but rather thinks aloud looking into space.* HETTY, *however, looks at* HARRIET, *talks intently and shadows her continually. The same is true of* MARGARET *and* MAGGIE. *The voices of the cultured women are affected and lingering, the voices of the primitive impulsive and more or less staccato.*

When the curtain rises HARRIET *is seated right of tea table, busying herself with the tea things.*

HETTY. Harriet. [*There is no answer.*] Harriet, my other self. [*There is no answer.*] My trained self.

HARRIET [*listens intently*]. Yes?

[*From behind* HARRIET'S *chair* HETTY *rises slowly.*]

HETTY. I want to talk to you.

HARRIET. Well?

HETTY [*looking at* HARRIET *admiringly*]. Oh, Harriet, you are beautiful to-day.

HARRIET. Am I presentable, Hetty?

HETTY. Suits me.

HARRIET. I've tried to make the best of the good points.

HETTY. My passions are deeper than yours. I can't keep on the mask as you do. I'm crude and real, you are my appearance in the world.

HARRIET. I am what you wish the world to believe you are.

HETTY. You are the part of me that has been trained.

HARRIET. I am your educated self.

HETTY. I am the rushing river; you are the ice over the current.

HARRIET. I am your subtle overtones.

HETTY. But together we are one woman, the wife of Charles Goodrich

HARRIET. There I disagree with you, Hetty, I alone am his wife.

HETTY [*indignantly*]. Harriet, how can you say such a thing!

HARRIET. Certainly. I am the one who flatters him. I have to be the one who talks to him. If I gave you a chance you would tell him at once that you dislike him.

HETTY [*moving away*]. I don't love him, that's certain.

HARRIET. You leave all the fibbing to me. He doesn't suspect that my calm, suave manner hides your hatred. Considering the amount of scheming it causes me it can safely be said that he is my husband.

HETTY. Oh, if you love him——

HARRIET. I? I haven't any feelings. It isn't my business to love anybody.

HETTY. Then why need you object to calling him my husband?

HARRIET. I resent your appropriation of a man who is managed only through the cleverness of my artifice.

HETTY. You may be clever enough to deceive him, Harriet, but I am still the one who suffers. I can't forget he is my husband. I can't forget that I might have married John Caldwell.

HARRIET. How foolish of you to remember John, just because we met his wife by chance.

HETTY. That's what I want to talk to you about. She may be here at any moment. I want to advise you about what to say to her this afternoon.

HARRIET. By all means tell me now and don't

interrupt while she is here. You have a most annoying habit of talking to me when people are present. Sometimes it is all I can do to keep my poise and appear *not* to be listening to you.

HETTY. Impress her.

HARRIET. Hetty, dear, is it not my custom to impress people?

HETTY. I hate her.

HARRIET. I can't let her see that.

HETTY. I hate her because she married John.

HARRIET. Only after you had refused him.

HETTY [*turning on* HARRIET]. Was it my fault that I refused him?

HARRIET. That's right, blame me.

HETTY. It was your fault. You told me he was too poor and never would be able to do anything in painting. Look at him now, known in Europe, just returned from eight years in Paris, famous.

HARRIET. It was too poor a gamble at the time. It was much safer to accept Charles's money and position.

HETTY. And then John married Margaret within the year.

HARRIET. Out of spite.

HETTY. Freckled, gauky-looking thing she was, too.

HARRIET [*a little sadly*]. Europe improved her. She was stunning the other morning.

HETTY. Make her jealous to-day.

HARRIET. Shall I be haughty or cordial or caustic or——

HETTY. Above all else you must let her know that we are rich.

HARRIET. Oh, yes, I do that quite easily now.

HETTY. You must put it on a bit.

HARRIET. Never fear.

HETTY. Tell her I love my husband.

HARRIET. My husband——

HETTY. Are you going to quarrel with me?

HARRIET [*moves away*]. No, I have no desire to quarrel with you. It is quite too uncomfortable. I couldn't get away from you if I tried.

HETTY [*stamping her foot and following* HARRIET]. You were a stupid fool to make me refuse John, I'll never forgive you—never——

HARRIET [*stopping and holding up her hand*]. Don't get me all excited. I'll be in no condition to meet her properly this afternoon.

HETTY [*passionately*]. I could choke you for robbing me of John.

HARRIET [*retreating*]. Don't muss me!

HETTY. You don't know how you have made me suffer.

HARRIET [*beginning to feel the strength of* HETTY'S *emotion surge through her and trying to conquer it*]. It is not my business to have heartaches.

HETTY. You're bloodless. Nothing but sham —sham—while I——

HARRIET [*emotionally*]. Be quiet! I can't let her see that I have been fighting with my inner self.

HETTY. And now after all my suffering you say it has cost you more than it has cost me to be married to Charles. But it's the pain here in my heart —I've paid the price—I've paid—— Charles is not your husband!

HARRIET [*trying to conquer emotion*]. He is.

HETTY [*follows* HARRIET]. He isn't.

HARRIET [*weakly*]. He is.

HETTY [*towering over* HARRIET]. He isn't! I'll kill you!

HARRIET [*overpowered, sinks into a chair*]. Don't—don't—you're stronger than I—you're——

HETTY. Say he's mine.

HARRIET. He's ours.

HETTY [*the telephone rings*]. There she is now.

[HETTY *hurries to 'phone but* HARRIET *regains her supremacy.*]

HARRIET [*authoritatively*]. Wait! I can't let the telephone girl down there hear my real self. It isn't proper. [*At 'phone.*] Show Mrs. Caldwell up.

HETTY. I'm so excited, my heart's in my mouth.

HARRIET [*at the mirror*]. A nice state you've put my nerves into.

HETTY. Don't let her see you're nervous.

HARRIET.* Quick, put the veil on, or she'll see *you* shining through me.

[HARRIET *takes a scarf of chiffon that has been lying over the back of a chair and drapes it on* HETTY, *covering her face. The chiffon is the same color of their gowns but paler in shade so that it pales* HETTY'S *darker gown to match* HARRIET'S *lighter one. As* HETTY *moves in the following scene the chiffon falls away revealing now and then the gown of deeper dye underneath.*]

* (The vaudeville production did not use Harriet's line about the veil because at the rise of the curtain Hetty is already veiled in chiffon the same dark green shade as her gown.)

HETTY. Tell her Charles is rich and fascinating—boast of our friends, make her feel she needs us.

HARRIET. I'll make her ask John to paint us.

HETTY. That's just my thought—if John paints our portrait——

HARRIET. We can wear an exquisite gown——

HETTY. And make him fall in love again and——

HARRIET [*schemingly*]. Yes.

[MARGARET *parts the portières back centre and extends her hand.* MARGARET *is followed by her counterpart* MAGGIE.]

Oh, MARGARET, I'm so glad to see you!

HETTY [*to* MAGGIE]. That's a lie.

MARGARET [*in superficial voice throughout*]. It's enchanting to see you, Harriet.

MAGGIE [*in emotional voice throughout*]. I'd bite you, if I dared.

HARRIET [*to* MARGARET]. Wasn't our meeting a stroke of luck?

MARGARET [*coming down left of table*]. I've thought of you so often, HARRIET; and to come back and find you living in New York.

HARRIET [*coming down right of table*]. Mr. Goodrich has many interests here.

MAGGIE [*to* MARGARET]. Flatter her.

MARGARET. I know, Mr. Goodrich is so successful.

HETTY [*to* HARRIET]. Tell her we're rich.

HARRIET [*to* MARGARET]. Won't you sit down?

MARGARET [*takes a chair*]. What a beautiful cabinet!*

HARRIET. Do you like it? I'm afraid Charles paid an extravagant price.

MAGGIE [*to* HETTY]. I don't believe it.

MARGARET [*sitting down. To* HARRIET]. I am sure he must have.

HARRIET [*sitting down*]. How well you are looking, Margaret.

HETTY. Yes, you are not. There are circles under your eyes.

MAGGIE [*to* HETTY]. I haven't eaten since breakfast and I'm hungry.

MARGARET [*to* HARRIET]. How well you are looking, too.

MAGGIE [*to* HETTY]. You have hard lines about your lips, are you happy?

HETTY [*to* HARRIET]. Don't let her know that I'm unhappy.

HARRIET [*to* MARGARET]. Why shouldn't I look well? My life is full, happy, complete——

* What beautiful lamps! (In vaudeville production.)

MAGGIE. I wonder.

HETTY [*in* HARRIET'S *ear*]. Tell her we have an automobile.

MARGARET [*to* HARRIET]. My life is complete, too.

MAGGIE. My heart is torn with sorrow; my husband cannot make a living. He will kill himself if he does not get an order for a painting.

MARGARET [*laughs*]. You must come and see us in our studio. John has been doing some excellent portraits. He cannot begin to fill his orders.

HETTY [*to* HARRIET]. Tell her we have an automobile.

HARRIET [*to* MARGARET]. Do you take lemon in your tea?

MAGGIE. Take cream. It's more filling.

MARGARET [*looking nonchalantly at tea things*]. No, cream, if you please. How cozy!

MAGGIE [*glaring at tea things*]. Only cakes! I could eat them all!!

HARRIET [*to* MARGARET]. How many lumps?

MAGGIE [*to* MARGARET]. Sugar is nourishing.

MARGARET [*to* HARRIET]. Three, please. I used to drink very sweet coffee in Turkey and ever since I've——

HETTY. I don't believe you were ever in Turkey.

MAGGIE. I wasn't, but it is none of your business.

HARRIET [*pouring tea*]. Have you been in Turkey, do tell me about it.

MAGGIE [*to* MARGARET]. Change the subject.

MARGARET [*to* HARRIET]. You must go there. You have so much taste in dress you would enjoy seeing their costumes.

MAGGIE. Isn't she going to pass the cake?

MARGARET [*to* HARRIET]. John painted several portraits there.

HETTY [*to* HARRIET]. Why don't you stop her bragging and tell her we have an automobile?

HARRIET [*offers cake across the table to* MARGARET]. Cake?

MAGGIE [*stands back of* MARGARET, *shadowing her as* HETTY *shadows* HARRIET. MAGGIE *reaches claws out for the cake and groans with joy*]. At last! [*But her claws do not touch the cake.*]

MARGARET [*with a graceful, nonchalant hand places cake upon her plate and bites at it slowly and delicately*]. Thank you.

HETTY [*to* HARRIET]. Automobile!

MAGGIE [*to* MARGARET]. Follow up the costumes with the suggestion that she would make a good

model for John. It isn't too early to begin getting what you came for.

MARGARET [*ignoring* MAGGIE]. What delicious cake.

HETTY [*excitedly to* HARRIET]. There's your chance for the auto.

HARRIET [*nonchalantly to* MARGARET]. Yes, it is good cake, isn't it? There are always a great many people buying it at Harper's. I sat in my automobile fifteen minutes this morning waiting for my chauffeur to get it.

MAGGIE [*to* MARGARET]. Make her order a portrait.

MARGARET [*to* HARRIET]. If you stopped at Harper's you must have noticed the new gowns at Henderson's. Aren't the shop windows alluring these days?

HARRIET. Even my chauffeur notices them.

MAGGIE. I know you have an automobile, I heard you the first time.

MARGARET. I notice gowns now with an artist's eye as John does. The one you have on, my dear, is very paintable.

HETTY. Don't let her see you're anxious to be painted.

HARRIET [*nonchalantly*]. Oh, it's just a little model.

MAGGIE [*to* MARGARET]. Don't seem anxious to get the order.

MARGARET [*nonchalantly*]. Perhaps it isn't the gown itself but the way you wear it that pleases the eye. Some people can wear anything with grace.

HETTY. Yes, I'm very graceful.

HARRIET [*to* MARGARET]. You flatter me, my dear.

MARGARET. On the contrary, Harriet, I have an intense admiration for you. I remember how beautiful you were—as a girl. In fact, I was quite jealous when John was paying you so much attention.

HETTY. She is gloating because I lost him.

HARRIET. Those were childhood days in a country town.

MAGGIE [*to* MARGARET]. She's trying to make you feel that John was only a country boy.

MARGARET. Most great men have come from the country. There is a fair chance that John will be added to the list.

HETTY. I know it and I am bitterly jealous of you.

HARRIET. Undoubtedly he owes much of his

success to you, Margaret, your experience in economy and your ability to endure hardship. Those first few years in Paris must have been a struggle.

MAGGIE. She is sneering at your poverty.

MARGARET. Yes, we did find life difficult at first, not the luxurious start a girl has who marries wealth.

HETTY [*to* HARRIET]. Deny that you married Charles for his money.

[HARRIET *deems it wise to ignore* HETTY'S *advice.*]

MARGARET. But John and I are so congenial in our tastes, that we were impervious to hardship or unhappiness.

HETTY [*in anguish*]. Do you love each other? Is it really true?

HARRIET [*sweetly*]. Did you have all the romance of starving for his art?

MAGGIE [*to* MARGARET]. She's taunting you. Get even with her.

MARGARET. Not for long. Prince Rier soon discovered John's genius, and introduced him royally to wealthy Parisians who gave him many orders.

HETTY [*to* MAGGIE]. Are you telling the truth or are you lying?

HARRIET. If he had so many opportunities there, you must have had great inducements to come back to the States.

MAGGIE [*to* HETTY]. We did, but not the kind you think.

MARGARET. John became the rage among Americans travelling in France, too, and they simply insisted upon his coming here.

HARRIET. Whom is he going to paint here?

MAGGIE [*frightened*]. What names dare I make up?

MARGARET [*calmly*]. Just at present Miss Dorothy Ainsworth of Oregon is posing. You may not know the name, but she is the daughter of a wealthy miner who found gold in Alaska.

HARRIET. I dare say there are many Western people we have never heard of.

MARGARET. You must have found social life in New York very interesting, Harriet, after the simplicity of our home town.

HETTY [*to* MAGGIE]. There's no need to remind us that our beginnings were the same.

HARRIET. Of course Charles's family made everything delightful for me. They are so well connected.

MAGGIE [*to* MARGARET]. Flatter her.

MARGARET. I heard it mentioned yesterday that you had made yourself very popular. Some one said you were very clever!

HARRIET [*pleased*]. Who told you that?

MAGGIE. Nobody!

MARGARET [*pleasantly*]. Oh, confidences should be suspected—respected, I mean. They said, too, that you are gaining some reputation as a critic of art.

HARRIET. I make no pretenses.

MARGARET. Are you and Mr. Goodrich interested in the same things, too?

HETTY. No!

HARRIET. Yes, indeed, Charles and I are inseparable.

MAGGIE. I wonder.

HARRIET. Do have another cake.

MAGGIE [*in relief*]. Oh, yes.

[*Again her claws extend but do not touch the cake.*]

MARGARET [*takes cake delicately*]. I really shouldn't—after my big luncheon. John took me to the Ritz and we are invited to the Bedfords' for dinner—they have such a magnificent house near the drive—I really shouldn't, but the cakes are so good.

MAGGIE. Starving!

HARRIET [*to* MARGARET]. More tea?

MAGGIE. Yes!

MARGARET. No, thank you. How wonderfully life has arranged itself for you. Wealth, position, a happy marriage, every opportunity to enjoy all pleasures; beauty, art—how happy you must be.

HETTY [*in anguish*]. Don't call me happy. I've never been happy since I gave up John. All these years without him—a future without him—no—no—I shall win him back—away from you—away from you——

HARRIET [*does not see* MAGGIE *pointing to cream and* MARGARET *stealing some*]. I sometimes think it is unfair for any one to be as happy as I am. Charles and I are just as much in love now as when we married. To me he is just the dearest man in the world.

MAGGIE [*passionately*]. My John is. I love him so much I could die for him. I'm going through hunger and want to make him great and he loves me. He worships me!

MARGARET [*leisurely to* HARRIET]. I should like to meet Mr. Goodrich. Bring him to our studio. John has some sketches to show. Not many, because all the portraits have been purchased by the

subjects. He gets as much as four thousand dollars now.

HETTY [*to* HARRIET]. Don't pay that much.

HARRIET [*to* MARGARET]. As much as that?

MARGARET. It is not really too much when one considers that John is in the foremost rank of artists to-day. A picture painted by him now will double and treble in value.

MAGGIE. It's all a lie. He is growing weak with despair.

HARRIET. Does he paint all day long?

MAGGIE. No, he draws advertisements for our bread.

MARGARET [*to* HARRIET]. When you and your husband come to see us, telephone first——

MAGGIE. Yes, so he can get the advertisements out of the way.

MARGARET. Otherwise you might arrive while he has a sitter, and John refuses to let me disturb him then.

HETTY. Make her ask for an order.

HARRIET [*to* MARGARET]. Le Grange offered to paint me for a thousand.

MARGARET. Louis Le Grange's reputation isn't worth more than that.

HARRIET. Well, I've heard his work well mentioned.

MAGGIE. Yes, he is doing splendid work.

MARGARET. Oh, dear me, no. He is only praised by the masses. He is accepted not at all by artists themselves.

HETTY [*anxiously*]. Must I really pay the full price?

HARRIET. Le Grange thought I would make a good subject.

MAGGIE [*to* MARGARET]. Let her fish for it.

MARGARET. Of course you would. Why don't you let Le Grange paint you, if you *trust* him?

HETTY. She doesn't seem anxious to have John do it.

HARRIET. But if Le Grange isn't accepted by artists, it would be a waste of time to pose for him, wouldn't it?

MARGARET. Yes, I think it would.

MAGGIE [*passionately to* HETTY *across back of table*]. Give us the order. John is so despondent he can't endure much longer. Help us! Help me! Save us!

HETTY [*to* HARRIET]. Don't seem too eager.

HARRIET. And yet if he charges only a thousand one might consider it.

MARGARET. If you really wish to be painted,

why don't you give a little more and have a portrait really worth while? John might be induced to do you for a little below his usual price considering that you used to be such good friends.

HETTY [*in glee*]. Hurrah!

HARRIET [*quietly to* MARGARET]. That's very nice of you to suggest—of course I don't know——

MAGGIE [*in fear*]. For God's sake, say yes.

MARGARET [*quietly to* HARRIET]. Of course, I don't know whether John would. He is very peculiar in these matters. He sets his value on his work and thinks it beneath him to discuss price.

HETTY [*to* MAGGIE]. You needn't try to make us feel small.

MARGARET. Still, I might quite delicately mention to him that inasmuch as you have many influential friends you would be very glad to—to——

MAGGIE [*to* HETTY]. Finish what I don't want to say.

HETTY [*to* HARRIET]. Help her out.

HARRIET. Oh, yes, introductions will follow the exhibition of my portrait. No doubt I——

HETTY [*to* HARRIET]. Be patronizing.

HARRIET. No doubt I shall be able to introduce your husband to his advantage.

MAGGIE [*relieved*]. Saved.

MARGARET. If I find John in a propitious mood I shall take pleasure, for your sake, in telling him about your beauty. Just as you are sitting now would be a lovely pose.

MAGGIE [*to* MARGARET]. We can go now.

HETTY [*to* HARRIET]. Don't let her think she is doing us a favor.

HARRIET. It will give me pleasure to add my name to your husband's list of patronesses.

MAGGIE [*excitedly to* MARGARET]. Run home and tell John the good news.

MARGARET [*leisurely to* HARRIET]. I little guessed when I came for a pleasant chat about old times that it would develop into business arrangements. I had no idea, Harriet, that you had any intention of being painted. By Le Grange, too. Well, I came just in time to rescue you.

MAGGIE [*to* MARGARET]. Run home and tell John. Hurry, hurry!

HETTY [*to* HARRIET]. You managed the order very neatly. She doesn't suspect that you wanted it.

HARRIET. Now if I am not satisfied with my portrait I shall blame you, Margaret, dear. I am relying upon your opinion of John's talent.

MAGGIE [*to* MARGARET]. She doesn't suspect what you came for. Run home and tell John!

HARRIET. You always had a brilliant mind, Margaret.

MARGARET. Ah, it is you who flatter, now.

MAGGIE [*to* MARGARET]. You don't have to stay so long. Hurry home!

HARRIET. Ah, one does not flatter when one tells the truth.

MARGARET [*smiles*]. I must be going or you will have me completely under your spell.

HETTY [*looks at clock*]. Yes, do go. I have to dress for dinner.

HARRIET [*to* MARGARET]. Oh, don't hurry.

MAGGIE [*to* HETTY]. I hate you!

MARGARET [*to* HARRIET]. No, really I must, but I hope we shall see each other often at the studio. I find you so stimulating.

HETTY [*to* MAGGIE]. I hate you!

HARRIET [*to* MARGARET]. It is indeed gratifying to find a kindred spirit.

MAGGIE [*to* HETTY]. I came for your gold.

MARGARET [*to* HARRIET]. How delightful it is to know you again.

HETTY [*to* MAGGIE]. I am going to make you and your husband suffer.

HARRIET. My kind regards to John.

MAGGIE [*to* HETTY]. He has forgotten all about you.

MARGARET [*rises*]. He will be so happy to receive them.

HETTY [*to* MAGGIE]. I can hardly wait to talk to him again.

HARRIET. I shall wait, then, until you send me word?

MARGARET [*offering her hand*]. I'll speak to John about it as soon as I can and tell you when to come.

[HARRIET *takes* MARGARET'S *hand affectionately.* HETTY *and* MAGGIE *rush at each other, throw back their veils, and fling their speeches fiercely at each other.*]

HETTY. I love him—I love him——

MAGGIE. He's starving—I'm starving——

HETTY. I'm going to take him away from you——

MAGGIE. I want your money—and your influence.

HETTY and MAGGIE. I'm going to rob you—rob you.

[*There is a cymbal crash, the lights go out and come up again slowly, leaving only* MARGARET *and* HARRIET *visible.*]

MARGARET [*quietly to* HARRIET]. I've had such a delightful afternoon.

HARRIET [*offering her hand*]. It has been a joy to see you.

MARGARET [*sweetly to* HARRIET]. Good-bye.

HARRIET [*sweetly to* MARGARET *as she kisses her*]. Good-bye, my dear.

Curtain.

IV

HELENA'S HUSBAND

An Historical Comedy

By

PHILIP MOELLER

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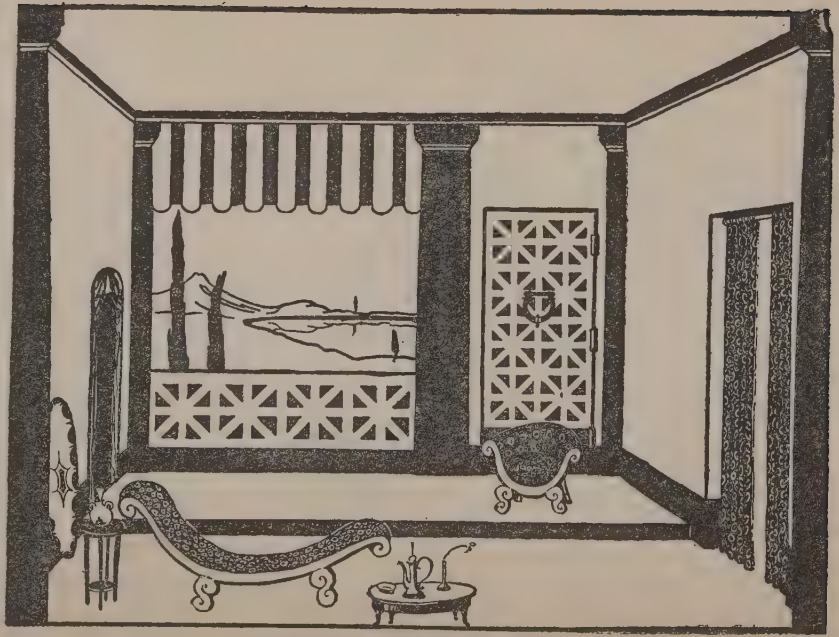

Scene for Helena's Husband

IV

HELENA'S HUSBAND

By
PHILIP MOELLER

"Helena's Husband" was produced by the Washington Square Players, under the direction of Philip Moeller, at the Bandbox Theatre, New York City, beginning October 4, 1915.

In the cast, in the order of their appearance, were the following:

HELENA, Queen of Sparta . .	*Noël Haddon*
TSUMU, her slave	*Helen Westley*
MENELAUS, the King . . .	*Frank Conroy*
ANALYTIKOS, his librarian . .	*Walter Frankl*
PARIS, a shepherd	*Harold Meltzer*

The scene was designed by Paul T. Frankl and the costumes by Robert Locker.

"Helena's Husband" was subsequently revived by the Washington Square Players at the Comedy

Theatre, New York City, beginning June 5, 1916, with Margaret Mower playing the part of Helen.

CHARACTERS

HELENA, the Queen
TSUMU, a black woman, slave to Helena
MENELAUS, the King
ANALYTIKOS, the King's librarian
PARIS, a shepherd

SCENE: *Is that archæological mystery, a Greek interior. A door on the right leads to the* KING'S *library, one on the left to the apartments of the* QUEEN. *Back right is the main entrance leading to the palace. Next this, running the full length of the wall, is a window with a platform, built out over the main court. Beyond is a view of hills bright with lemon groves, and in the far distance shimmers the sea. On the wall near the* QUEEN'S *room hangs an old shield rusty with disuse. A bust of Zeus stands on a pedestal against the right wall. There are low coffers about the room from which hang the ends of vivid colored robes. The scene is bathed in intense sunlight.*

TSUMU *is massaging the* QUEEN.

HELENA. There's no doubt about it.

TSUMU. Analytikos says there is much doubt about all things.

HELENA. Never mind what he says. I envy you your complexion.

TSUMU [*falling prostrate before* HELENA]. Whom the Queen envies should beware.

HELENA [*annoyed*]. Get up, Tsumu. You make me nervous tumbling about like that.

TSUMU [*still on the floor*]. Why does the great Queen envy Tsumu?

HELENA. Get up, you silly. [*She kicks her.*] I envy you because you can run about and never worry about getting sunburnt.

TSUMU [*on her knees*]. The radiant beauty of the Queen is unspoilable.

HELENA. That's just what's worrying me, Tsumu. When beauty is so perfect the slightest jar may mean a jolt. [*She goes over and looks at her reflection in the shield.*] I can't see myself as well as I would like to. The King's shield is tarnished. Menelaus has been too long out of battle.

TSUMU [*handing her a hand mirror*]. The Gods will keep Sparta free from strife.

HELENA. I'll have you beaten if you assume that prophetic tone with me. There's one thing I

can't stand, and that's a know-all. [*Flinging the hand mirror to the floor.*]

TSUMU [*in alarm*]. Gods grant you haven't bent it.

HELENA. These little mirrors are useless. His shield is the only thing in which I can see myself full-length. If he only went to war, he'd have to have it cleaned.

TSUMU [*putting the mirror on a table near the* QUEEN]. The King is a lover of peace.

HELENA. The King is a lover of comfort. Have you noticed that he spends more time than he used to in the library?

TSUMU. He is busy with questions of State.

HELENA. You know perfectly well that when anything's the matter with the Government it's always straightened out at the other end of the palace. Finish my shoulder. [*She examines her arm.*] I doubt if there is a finer skin than this in Sparta.

[TSUMU *begins to massage the* QUEEN'S *shoulder.*]

HELENA [*taking up a mirror*]. That touch of deep carmine right here in the centre of my lips was quite an idea.

TSUMU [*busily pounding the* QUEEN]. An inspiration of the Gods!

HELENA. The Gods have nothing to do with it. I copied it from a low woman I saw at the circus. I can't understand how these bad women have such good ideas. [HELENA *twists about.*]

TSUMU. If your majesty doesn't sit still, I may pinch you.

HELENA [*boxing her ears*]. None of your tricks, you ebony fiend!

TSUMU [*crouching*]. Descendant of paradise, forgive me.

HELENA. If you bruise my perfect flesh, the King will kill you. My beauty is his religion. He can sit for hours, as if at prayer, just examining the arch of my foot. Tsumu, you may kiss my foot.

TSUMU [*prostrate*]. May the Gods make me worthy of your kindness!

HELENA. That's enough. Tsumu, are you married?

TSUMU [*getting up*]. I've been so busy having babies I never had time to get married.

HELENA. It's a great disillusionment.

TSUMU [*aghast*]. What!

HELENA. I'm not complaining. Moo Moo is

the best of husbands, but sometimes being adored too much is trying. [*She sighs deeply.*] I think I'll wear my heliotrope this afternoon.

[*A trumpet sounds below in the courtyard.* TSUMU *goes to the window.*]

TSUMU. They are changing the guards at the gates of the palace. It's almost time for your bath.

[*She begins scraping the massage ointment back into the box.*]

HELENA. You're as careful with that ointment as Moo Moo is with me.

TSUMU. Precious things need precious guarding.

HELENA. It's very short-sighted on Moo Moo's part to send everybody to the galleys who dares lift a head when I pass by—and all those nice-looking soldiers! Why—the only men I ever see besides Moo Moo are Analytikos and a lot of useless eunuchs.

TSUMU. Oh, those eunuchs!

HELENA [*as she sits dreaming*]. I wish, I wish——

[*She stops short.*]

TSUMU. You have but to speak your desire to the King.

HELENA [*shocked*]. Tsumu! How can you think of such a thing? I'm not a bad woman.

TSUMU. He would die for you.

HELENA [*relieved*]. Ah! Do you think so, Tsumu?

TSUMU. All Sparta knows that His Majesty is a lover of peace, and yet he would rush into battle to save you.

HELENA. I should love to have men fighting for me.

TSUMU [*in high alarm*]. May Zeus turn a deaf ear to your voice.

HELENA. Don't be impertinent, Tsumu. I've got to have some sort of amusement.

TSUMU. You've only to wait till next week, and you can see another of the priestesses sacrificed to Diana.

HELENA. That doesn't interest me any longer. The girls are positively beginning to like it. No! My mind is set on war.

TSUMU [*terrified*]. I have five fathers of my children to lose.

HELENA. War, or—or——

TSUMU [*hopefully*]. Have I been so long your slave that I no longer know your wish?

HELENA [*very simply*]. Well, I should like to have a lover.

TSUMU [*springs up and rushes over in horror to draw*

the curtains across the door to the library. All of a tremble]. Gods grant they didn't hear you.

HELENA. Don't be alarmed, Tsumu. Analytikos is over eighty.

[*She bursts into a loud peal of laughter and* MENELAUS *rushes into the room.*]

MENELAUS [*in high irritation*]. I wish you wouldn't make so much noise in here. A King might at least expect quiet in his own palace.

HELENA. Tsumu, see if my bath is ready.

[TSUMU *exits.*]

You used not speak like that to me, Moo Moo.

MENELAUS [*in a temper*]. How many times must I tell you that my name is Menelaus and that it isn't "Moo Moo?"

HELENA [*sweetly*]. I'll never do it again, Moo Moo. [*She giggles.*]

MENELAUS. Your laugh gets on my nerves. It's louder than it used to be.

HELENA. If you wish it, I'll never, never laugh again.

MENELAUS. You've promised that too often.

HELENA [*sadly*]. Things are not as they used to be.

MENELAUS. Are you going to start that again?

HELENA [*with a tinge of melancholy*]. I suppose you'd like me to be still and sad.

MENELAUS [*bitterly*]. Is it too much to hope that you might be still and happy?

HELENA [*speaking very quickly and tragically*]. Don't treat me cruelly, Moo Moo. You don't understand me. No man ever really understands a woman. There are terrible depths to my nature. I had a long talk with Dr. Æsculapius only last week, and he told me I'm too introspective. It's the curse of us emotional women. I'm really quite worried, but much you care, much you care. [*A note of tears comes into her voice.*] I'm sure you don't love me any more, Moo Moo. No! No! Don't answer me! If you did you couldn't speak to me the way you do. I've never wronged you in deed or in thought. No, never—never. I've given up my hopes and aspirations, because I knew you wanted me around you. And now, NOW——[*She can contain the tears no longer.*] Because I have neglected my beauty and because I am old and ugly, you regret that Ulysses or Agamemnon didn't marry me when you all wanted me, and I know you curse the day you ever saw me.

[*She is breathless.*]

MENELAUS [*fuming*]. Well! Have you done?

HELENA. No. I could say a great deal more, but I'm not a talkative woman.

[ANALYTIKOS *comes in from the library.*]

ANALYTIKOS. Your Majesty, are we to read no longer to-day?

HELENA. I have something to say to the King.

[ANALYTIKOS *goes toward the library.* MENELAUS *anxiously stops him.*]

MENELAUS. No. Stay here. You are a wise man and will understand the wisdom of the Queen.

ANALYTIKOS [*bowing to* HELENA]. Helena is wise as she is beautiful.

MENELAUS. She is attempting to prove to me in a thousand words that she's a silent woman.

ANALYTIKOS. Women are seldom silent.

[HELENA *resents this.*]

Their beauty is forever speaking for them.

HELENA. The years have, indeed, taught you wisdom.

[TSUMU *enters.*]

TSUMU. The almond water awaits Your Majesty.

HELENA. I hope you haven't forgotten the chiropodist.

TSUMU. He has been commanded but he's always late. He's so busy.

HELENA [*in a purring tone to* MENELAUS]. Moo Moo.

[MENELAUS, *bored, turns away.*]

HELENA [*to* TSUMU]. I think after all I'll wear my Sicily blue.

[*She and* TSUMU *go into the* QUEEN'S *apartment.*]

ANALYTIKOS. Shall we go back to the library?

MENELAUS. My mind is unhinged again—that woman with her endless protestations.

ANALYTIKOS. I am sorry the poets no longer divert you.

MENELAUS. A little poetry is always too much.

ANALYTIKOS. To-morrow we will try the historians.

MENELAUS. No! Not the historians. I want the truth for a change.

ANALYTIKOS. The truth!

MENELAUS. Where in books can I find escape from the grim reality of being hitched for life to such a wife? Bah!

ANALYTIKOS. Philosophy teaches——

MENELAUS. Why have the Gods made woman necessary to man, and made them fools?

ANALYTIKOS. For seventy years I have been resolving the problem of woman and even at my age——

MENELAUS. Give it up, old man. The answer is —don't.

ANALYTIKOS. Such endless variety, and yet——

MENELAUS [*with the conviction of finality*]. There are only two sorts of women! Those who are failures and those who realize it.

ANALYTIKOS. Is not Penelope, the model wife of your cousin Ulysses, an exception?

MENELAUS. Duty is the refuge of the unbeautiful. She is as commonplace as she is ugly. [*And then with deep bitterness.*] Why didn't *he* marry Helen when we all wanted her? He was too wise for that. He is the only man I've ever known who seems able to direct destiny.

ANALYTIKOS. You should not blame the Gods for a lack of will.

MENELAUS [*shouting*]. Will! Heaven knows I do not lack the will to rid myself of this painted puppet, but where is the instrument ready to my hand?

[*At this moment a* SHEPHERD *of Apollonian beauty leaps across the rail of the balcony and*

bounds into the room. MENELAUS *and* ANALYTIKOS *start back in amazement.*]

ANALYTIKOS. Who are you?

PARIS. An adventurer.

ANALYTIKOS. Then you have reached the end of your story. In a moment you will die.

PARIS. I have no faith in prophets.

ANALYTIKOS. The soldiers of the King will give you faith. Don't you know that it means death for any man to enter the apartments of the Queen?

PARIS [*looking from one to the other*]. Oh! So you're a couple of eunuchs.

[*Though nearly eighty this is too much for* ANALYTIKOS *to bear. He rushes to call the guards, but* MENELAUS *stops him.*]

PARIS [*to* ANALYTIKOS]. Thanks.

ANALYTIKOS. You thank me for telling you your doom?

PARIS. No—for convincing me that I'm where I want to be. It's taken me a long while, but I knew I'd get here. [*And then very intimately to* MENELAUS.] Where's the Queen?

MENELAUS. Where do you come from?

PARIS. From the hills. I had come down into the market-place to sell my sheep. I had my hood

filled with apples. They were golden-red like a thousand sunsets.

MENELAUS [*annoyed*]. You might skip those bucolic details.

PARIS. At the fair I met three ancient gypsies.

MENELAUS. What have they to do with you coming here?

PARIS. You don't seem very patient. Can't I tell my story in my own way? They asked me for the apple I was eating and I asked them what they'd give for it.

MENELAUS. I'm not interested in market quotations.

PARIS. You take everything so literally. I'm sure you're easily bored.

MENELAUS [*with meaning*]. I am.

PARIS [*going on cheerfully*]. The first was to give me all the money she could beg, and the second was to tell me all the truth she could learn by listening, and the third promised me a pretty girl. So I chose——

[*He hesitates.*]

ANALYTIKOS. You cannot escape by spinning out your tale.

PARIS. Death is the end of one story and the beginning of another.

MENELAUS. Well! Well! Come to the point. Which did you choose?

PARIS [*smiling*]. Well, you see I'd been in the hills for a long while, so I picked the girl.

ANALYTIKOS. It would have been better for you if you had chosen wisdom.

PARIS. I knew you'd say that.

ANALYTIKOS. I have spoken truly. In a moment you will die.

PARIS. It is because the old have forgotten life that they preach wisdom.

MENELAUS. So you chose the girl? Well, go on.

PARIS. This made the other cronies angry, and when I tossed her the apple one of the others yelped at me: "You may as well seek the Queen of Sparta: she is the fairest of women." And as I turned away I heard their laughter, but the words had set my heart aflame and though it costs me my life, I'll follow the adventure.

ANALYTIKOS [*scandalized*]. Haven't we heard enough of this?

MENELAUS [*deeply*]. No! I want to hear how the story ends. It may amuse the King. [*He makes a sign to* ANALYTIKOS.]

PARIS. And on the ship at night I looked long at the stars and dreamed of possessing Helen.

[ANALYTIKOS *makes an involuntary movement toward the balcony but* MENELAUS *stops him.*]

Desire has been my guiding Mercury; the Fates are with me, and here I am!

ANALYTIKOS. The wrath of the King will show you no mercy.

PARIS [*nonchalantly*]. I'm not afraid of the King. He's fat, and—a fool.

ANALYTIKOS. Shall I call the guards?

[MENELAUS *stops him.*]

MENELAUS [*very significantly*]. So you would give your life for a glimpse of the Queen?

PARIS [*swiftly*]. Yes! My immortal soul, and if the fables tell the truth, the sight will be worth the forfeit.

MENELAUS [*suddenly jumping up*]. It shall be as you wish!

PARIS [*buoyantly*]. Venus has smiled on me.

MENELAUS. In there beyond the library you will find a room with a bath. Wait there till I call you.

PARIS. Is this some trick to catch me?

MENELAUS. A Spartan cannot lie.

PARIS. What will happen to you if the King hears of this?

MENELAUS. I will answer for the king. Go

[PARIS *exits into the library.*

ANALYTIKOS [*rubbing his hands*]. Shall I order the boiling oil?

MENELAUS [*surprised*]. Oil?

ANALYTIKOS. Now that he is being cleaned for the sacrifice.

MENELAUS. His torture will be greater than being boiled alive.

ANALYTIKOS [*eagerly*]. You'll have him hurled from the walls of the palace to a forest of waiting spears below?

MENELAUS. None is so blind as he who sees too much.

ANALYTIKOS. Your Majesty is subtle in his cruelty.

MENELAUS. Haven't the years taught you the cheapness of revenge?

ANALYTIKOS [*mystified*]. You do not intend to alter destiny.

MENELAUS. Never before has destiny been so clear to me.

ANALYTIKOS. Then the boy must die.

MENELAUS [*with slow determination*]. No! He has been sent by the Gods to save me!

ANALYTIKOS. Your majesty! [*He is trembling with apprehension.*]

MENELAUS [*with unbudgeable conviction*]. Helena must elope with him!

ANALYTIKOS [*falling into a seat*]. Ye Gods!

MENELAUS [*quickly*]. I couldn't divorce the Queen. That would set a bad example.

ANALYTIKOS. Yes, very.

MENELAUS. I couldn't desert her. That would be beneath my honor.

ANALYTIKOS [*deeply*]. Was there no other way?

MENELAUS [*pompously*]. The King can do no wrong, and besides I hate the smell of blood. Are you a prophet as well as a scholar? Will she go?

ANALYTIKOS. To-night I will read the stars.

MENELAUS [*meaningfully*]. By to-night I'll not need you to tell me.

[ANALYTIKOS *sits deep in thought.*]

Well?

ANALYTIKOS. Ethics cite no precedent.

MENELAUS. Do you mean to say I'm not justified?

ANALYTIKOS [*cogitating*]. Who can establish the punctilious ratio between necessity and desire?

MENELAUS [*beginning to fume*]. This is no time for language. Just put yourself in my place.

ANALYTIKOS. Being you, how can I judge as I?

MENELAUS [*losing control*]. May you choke on your dialectics! Zeus himself could have stood it no longer.

ANALYTIKOS. Have you given her soul a chance to grow?

MENELAUS. Her soul, indeed! It's shut in her rouge pot. [*He has been strutting about. Suddenly he sits down crushing a roll of papyrus. He takes it up and in utter disgust reads.*] "The perfect hip, its development and permanence." Bah! [*He flings it to the floor.*] I've done what I had to do, and Gods grant the bait may be sweet enough to catch the Queen.

ANALYTIKOS. If you had diverted yourself with a war or two you might have forgotten your troubles at home.

MENELAUS [*frightened*]. I detest dissension of any kind—my dream was perpetual peace in comfortable domesticity with a womanly woman to warm my sandals.

ANALYTIKOS. Is not the Queen——?

MENELAUS. No! No! The whole world is but her mirror. And I'm expected to face that woman every morning at breakfast for the rest of my life, and by Venus that's more than even a King can bear!

ANALYTIKOS. Even a King cannot alter destiny. I warn you, whom the Gods have joined together——

MENELAUS [*in an outburst*]. Is for man to break asunder!

ANALYTIKOS [*deeply shocked*]. You talk like an atheist.

MENELAUS. I never allow religion to interfere with life. Go call the victim and see that he be left alone with the Queen. [MENELAUS *exits and* ANALYTIKOS *goes over to the door of the library and summons* PARIS, *who enters clad in a gorgeous robe.*]

PARIS. I found this in there. It looks rather well, doesn't it? Ah! So you're alone. I suppose that stupid friend of yours has gone to tell the King. When do I see the Queen?

ANALYTIKOS. At once. [*He goes to the door of the* QUEEN'S *apartment and claps his hand.* TSUMU *enters and at the sight of her* PARIS *recoils the full length of the room.*]

PARIS. I thought the Queen was a blonde!

ANALYTIKOS. Tell Her Majesty a stranger awaits her here.

[TSUMU *exits, her eyes wide on* PARIS. You should thank the Gods for this moment.

PARIS [*his eyes on the door*]. You do it for me. I can never remember all their names.

[HELENA *enters clad in her Sicily blue, crowned with a garland of golden flowers. She and* PARIS *stand riveted, looking at each other. Their attitude might be described as fatalistic.* ANALYTIKOS *watches them for a moment and then with hands and head lifted to heaven he goes into the library.*]

PARIS [*quivering with emotion*]. I have the most strange sensation of having seen you before. Something I can't explain——

HELENA [*quite practically*]. Please don't bother about all sorts of fine distinctions. Under the influence of Analytikos and my husband, life has become a mess of indecision. I'm a simple, direct woman and I expect you to say just what you think.

PARIS. Do you? Very well, then—— [*He comes a step nearer to her.*] Fate is impelling me toward you.

HELENA. Yes. That's much better. So you're

a fatalist. It's very Greek. I don't see what our dramatists would do without it.

PARIS. In my country there are no dramatists. We are too busy with reality.

HELENA. Your people must be uncivilized barbarians.

PARIS. My people are a genuine people. There is but one thing we worship.

HELENA. Don't tell me it's money.

PARIS. It's——

HELENA. Analytikos says if there weren't any money, there wouldn't be any of those ridiculous socialists.

PARIS. It isn't money. It's sincerity.

HELENA. I, too, believe in sincerity. It's the loveliest thing in the world.

PARIS. And the most dangerous.

HELENA. The truth is never dangerous.

PARIS. Except when told.

HELENA [*making room on the couch for him to sit next to her*]. You mustn't say wicked things to me.

PARIS. Can your theories survive a test?

HELENA [*beautifully*]. Truth is eternal and survives all tests.

PARIS. No. Perhaps, after all, your soul is not ready for the supremest heights.

HELENA. Do you mean to say I'm not religious? Religion teaches the meaning of love.

PARIS. Has it taught you to love your husband?

HELENA [*starting up and immediately sitting down again*]. How dare you speak to me like that?

PARIS. You see. I was right.

[*He goes toward the balcony.*]

HELENA [*stopping him*]. Whatever made you think so?

PARIS. I've heard people talk of the King. You could never love a man like that.

HELENA [*beautifully*]. A woman's first duty is to love her husband.

PARIS. There is a higher right than duty.

HELENA [*with conviction*]. Right is right.

PARIS [*with admiration*]. The world has libelled you.

HELENA. Me! The Queen?

PARIS. You are as wise as you are beautiful.

HELENA [*smiling coyly*]. Why, you hardly know me.

PARIS. I know you! I, better than all men.

HELENA. You?

PARIS [*rapturously*]. Human law has given you to Menelaus, but divine law makes you mine.

HELENA [*in amazement*]. What!

PARIS. I alone appreciate your beauty. I alone can reach your soul.

HELENA. Ah!

PARIS. You hate your husband!

HELENA [*drawing back*]. Why do you look at me like that?

PARIS. To see if there's one woman in the world who dares tell the truth.

HELENA. My husband doesn't understand me.

PARIS [*with conviction*]. I knew you detested him.

HELENA. He never listens to my aspirations.

PARIS. Egoist.

HELENA [*assuming an irresistible pose*]. I'm tired of being only lovely. He doesn't realize the meaning of spiritual intercourse, of soul communion.

PARIS. Fool!

HELENA. You dare call Moo Moo a fool?

PARIS. Has he not been too blind to see that your soul outshines your beauty? [*Then, very dramatically.*] You're stifling!

HELENA [*clearing her throat*]. I—I———

PARIS. He has made you sit upon your wings.

[HELENA, *jumping up, shifts her position.*]
You are groping in the darkness.

HELENA. Don't be silly. It's very light in here.

PARIS [*undisturbed*]. You are stumbling, and I have come to lead you. [*He steps toward her.*]

HELENA. Stop right there!

[PARIS *stops.*]
No man but the King can come within ten feet of me. It's a court tradition.

PARIS. Necessity knows no tradition. [*He falls on his knees before her.*] I shall come close to you, though the flame of your beauty consume me.

HELENA. You'd better be careful what you say to me. Remember I'm the Queen.

PARIS. No man weighs his words who has but a moment to live.

HELENA. You said that exactly like an actor.

[*He leans very close to her.*]
What are you doing now?

PARIS. I am looking into you. You are the clear glass in which I read the secret of the universe.

HELENA. The secret of the universe. Ah! Perhaps you could understand me.

PARIS. First you must understand yourself.

HELENA [*instinctively taking up a mirror*]. How?

PARIS. You must break with all this prose. [*With an unconscious gesture he sweeps a tray of toilet articles from the table.* HELENA *emits a little shriek.*]

HELENA. The ointment!

PARIS [*rushing to the window and pointing to the distance*]. And climb to infinite poesie!

HELENA [*catching his enthusiasm, says very blandly*]. There is nothing in the world like poetry.

PARIS [*lyrically*]. Have you ever heard the poignant breathing of the stars?

HELENA. No. I don't believe in astrology.

PARIS. Have you ever smelt the powdery mists of the sun?

HELENA. I should sneeze myself to death.

PARIS. Have you ever listened to the sapphire soul of the sea?

HELENA. Has the sea a soul? But please don't stop talking. You do it so beautifully.

PARIS. Deeds are sweeter than words. Shall we go hand in hand to meet eternity?

HELENA [*not comprehending him*]. That's very pretty. Say it again.

PARIS [*passionately*]. There's but a moment of life left me. I shall stifle it in ecstasy. Helena, Helena, I adore you!

HELENA [*jumping up in high surprise*]. You're not making love to me, you naughty boy?

PARIS. Helena!

HELENA. You've spoken to me so little, and already you dare to do that.

PARIS [*impetuously*]. I am a lover of life. I skip the inessentials.

HELENA. Remember who I am.

PARIS. I have not forgotten, Daughter of Heaven. [*Suddenly he leaps to his feet.*] Listen!

HELENA. Shhh! That's the King and Analytikos in the library.

PARIS. No! No! Don't you hear the flutter of wings?

HELENA. Wings?

PARIS [*ecstatically*]. Venus, mother of Love!

HELENA [*alarmed*]. What is it?

PARIS. She has sent her messenger. I hear the patter of little feet.

HELENA. Those little feet are the soldiers below in the courtyard. [*A trumpet sounds.*]

PARIS [*the truth of the situation breaking through his emotion*]. In a moment I shall be killed.

HELENA. Killed?

PARIS. Save me and save yourself!

HELENA. Myself?

PARIS. I shall rescue you and lead you on to life.

HELENA. No one has ever spoken to me like that before.

PARIS. This is the first time your ears have heard the truth.

HELENA. Was it of you I've been dreaming?

PARIS. Your dream was but your unrealized desire.

HELENA. Menelaus has never made me feel like this. [*And then with a sudden shriek.*] Oh! I'm a wicked woman!

PARIS. No! No!

HELENA. For years I've been living with a man I didn't love.

PARIS. Yes! Yes!

HELENA. I'm lost!

PARIS [*at a loss*]. No! Yes! Yes! No!

HELENA. It was a profanation of the most holy.

PARIS. The holiest awaits you, Helena! Our love will lighten the Plutonian realms.

HELENA. Menelaus never spoke to me like that.

PARIS. 'Tis but the first whisper of my adoration.

HELENA. I can't face him every morning at

breakfast for the rest of my life. That's even more than a Queen can bear.

PARIS. I am waiting to release you.

HELENA. I've stood it for seven years.

PARIS. I've been coming to you since the beginning of time.

HELENA. There is something urging me to go with you, something I do not understand.

PARIS. Quick! There is but a moment left us. [*He takes her rapturously in his arms. There is a passionate embrace in the midst of which* TSUMU *enters.*]

TSUMU. The chiropodist has come.

HELENA. Bring me my outer garment and my purse.

[TSUMU *exits, her eyes wide on* PARIS.

PARIS. Helena! Helena!

[HELENA *looks about her and takes up the papyrus that* MENELAUS *has flung to the floor.*]

HELENA. A last word to the King. [*She looks at the papyrus.*] No, this won't do; I shall have to take this with me.

PARIS. What is it?

HELENA. Maskanda's discourse on the hip.

[*A trumpet sounds below in the courtyard.*]

PARIS [*excitedly*]. Leave it—or your hip may cost me my head. We haven't a minute to spare. Hurry! Hurry!

[HELENA *takes up an eyebrow pencil and writes on the back of the papyrus. She looks for a place to put it and seeing the shield she smears it with some of the ointment and sticks the papyrus to it.*]

PARIS [*watching her in ecstasy*]. You are the fairest of all fair women and your name will blaze as a symbol throughout eternity.

[TSUMU *enters with the purse and the* QUEEN'S *outer robe.*]

HELENA [*tossing the purse to* PARIS]. Here, we may need this.

PARIS [*throwing it back to* TSUMU]. This for your silence, daughter of darkness. A prince has no heed of purses.

TSUMU [*looking at him*]. A prince!

HELENA [*gloriously*]. My prince of poetry. My deliverer!

PARIS [*divinely*]. My queen of love!

[*They go out,* TSUMU *looking after them in speechless amazement. Suddenly she sees*

the papyrus on the shield, runs over and reads it and then rushes to the door of the library.]

TSUMU [*calling*]. Analytikos. [*She hides the purse in her bosom.* ANALYTIKOS *enters, scroll in hand.*]

ANALYTIKOS. Has the Queen summoned me?

TSUMU [*mysteriously*]. A terrible thing has happened.

ANALYTIKOS. What's the matter?

TSUMU. Where's the King?

ANALYTIKOS. In the library.

TSUMU. I have news more precious than the gold of Midas.

ANALYTIKOS [*giving her a purse*]. Well! What is it?

TSUMU [*speaking very dramatically and watching the effect of her words*]. The Queen has deserted Menelaus.

ANALYTIKOS [*receiving the shock philosophically*]. Swift are the ways of Nature. The Gods have smiled upon him.

TSUMU. The Gods have forsaken the King to smile upon a prince.

ANALYTIKOS. What?

TSUMU. He was a prince.

ANALYTIKOS [*apprehensively*]. Why do you say that?

TSUMU [*clutching her bosom*]. I have a good reason to know.

[*There is a sound of voices below in the courtyard.* MENELAUS *rushes in expectantly.* TSUMU *falls prostrate before him.*]

Oh, King, in thy bottomless agony blame not a blameless negress. The Queen has fled!

MENELAUS [*in his delight forgetting himself and flinging her a purse*]. Is it true?

TSUMU. Woe! Woe is me!

MENELAUS [*storming*]. Out of my sight, you eyeless Argus!

ANALYTIKOS [*to* TSUMU]. Quick, send a messenger. Find out who he was.

[TSUMU *sticks the third purse in her bosom and runs out.*]

MENELAUS [*with radiant happiness, kneeling before the bust of Zeus*]. Ye Gods, I thank ye. Peace and a happy life at last.

[*The shouts in the courtyard grow louder.*]

ANALYTIKOS. The news has spread through the palace.

MENELAUS [*in trepidation, springing up*]. No one would dare stop the progress of the Queen.

TSUMU [*rushes in and prostrates herself before the* KING]. Woe is me! They have gone by the road to the harbor.

MENELAUS [*anxiously*]. Yes! Yes!

TSUMU. By the King's orders no man has dared gaze upon Her Majesty. They all fell prostrate before her.

MENELAUS. Good! Good! [*Attempting to cover his delight.*] Go! Go! You garrulous dog.

[TSUMU *gets up and points to shield.* ANALYTIKOS *and the* KING *look toward it.* ANALYTIKOS *tears off the papyrus and brings it to* MENELAUS. TSUMU, *watching them, exits.*]

MENELAUS [*reading*]. "I am not a bad woman. I did what I had to do." How Greek to blame fate for what one wants to do.

[TSUMU *again comes tumbling in.*]

TSUMU [*again prostrate before the* KING]. A rumor flies through the city. He—he——

ANALYTIKOS [*anxiously*]. Well? Well?

TSUMU. He—he——

MENELAUS [*furiously to* ANALYTIKOS]. Rid me of this croaking raven.

TSUMU. Evil has fallen on Sparta. He——

ANALYTIKOS. Yes—yes——

MENELAUS [*in a rage*]. Out of my sight, perfidious Nubian.

[*Sounds of confusion in the courtyard. Suddenly she springs to her feet and yells at the top of her voice.*]

TSUMU. He was Paris, Prince of Troy!

[*They all start back.* ANALYTIKOS *stumbles into a seat.* MENELAUS *turns pale.* TSUMU *leers like a black Nemesis.*]

ANALYTIKOS [*very ominously*]. Who can read the secret of the Fates?

MENELAUS [*frightened*]. What do you mean?

ANALYTIKOS. He is the son of Priam, King of Troy.

TSUMU [*adding fuel*]. And of Hecuba, Queen of the Trojans. [*She rushes out to spread the news.*]

ANALYTIKOS. That makes the matter international.

MENELAUS [*quickly*]. But we have treaties with Troy.

ANALYTIKOS. Circumstances alter treaties. They will mean nothing.

MENELAUS. Nothing?

ANALYTIKOS. No more than a scrap of papyrus. Sparta will fight to regain her Queen.

MENELAUS. But I don't want her back.

ANALYTIKOS. Can you tell that to Sparta? Remember, the King can do no wrong. Last night I dreamed of war.

MENELAUS. No! No! Don't say that. After the scandal I can't be expected to fight to get her back.

ANALYTIKOS. Sparta will see with the eyes of chivalry.

MENELAUS [*fuming*]. But I don't believe in war.

ANALYTIKOS [*still obdurate*]. Have you forgotten the oath pledged of old, with Ulysses and Agamemnon? They have sworn, if ever the time came, to fight and defend the Queen.

MENELAUS [*bitterly*]. I didn't think of the triple alliance.

ANALYTIKOS. Can Sparta ask less of her King?

MENELAUS. Let's hear the other side. We can perhaps arbitrate. Peace at any price.

ANALYTIKOS. Some bargains are too cheap.

MENELAUS [*hopelessly*]. But I am a pacifist.

ANALYTIKOS. You are Menelaus of Sparta, and Sparta's a nation of soldiers.

MENELAUS [*desperately*]. I am too proud to fight!

ANALYTIKOS. Here, put on your shield. [*A great clamor comes up from the courtyard.* ANALYTIKOS *steps out on the balcony and is greeted with shouts of "The King! The King!" Addressing the crowd.*] People of Sparta, this calamity has been forced upon us.

[MENELAUS *winces.*]

We are a peaceful people. But thanks to our unparalleled efficiency, the military system of Sparta is the most powerful in all Greece and we can mobilize in half an hour.

[*Loud acclaims from the people.* MENELAUS, *the papyrus still in hand, crawls over and attempts to stop* ANALYTIKOS.]

ANALYTIKOS [*not noticing him*]. In the midst of connubial and communal peace the thunderbolt has fallen on the King.

[MENELAUS *tugs at* ANALYTIKOS' *robe.*]

Broken in spirit as he is, he is already pawing the ground like a battle steed. Never will we lay down our arms! We and Jupiter! [*Cheers.*] Never until the Queen is restored to Menelaus. Never, even if it takes ten years.

[MENELAUS *squirms. A loud cheer.*]

Even now the King is buckling on his shield. [*More cheers.* ANALYTIKOS *steps farther forward and then with bursting eloquence.*] One hate we have and one alone! [*Yells from below.*]

Hate by water and hate by land,
Hate of the head and hate of the hand,
Hate of Paris and hate of Troy
That has broken the Queen for a moment's toy.

[*The yells grow fiercer.*]

Zeus' thunder will shatter the Trojan throne.
We have one hate and one alone!

[MENELAUS *sits on the floor dejectedly looking at the papyrus. A thunder of voices from the people.*]

We have one hate and one alone. Troy! Troy!

[*Helmets and swords are thrown into the air. The cheers grow tumultuous, trumpets are blown, and the curtain falls.*]